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# GWENDA

MABEL BARNES-GRUNDY

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**G W E N D A**



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“ I know him very well. Here he is ”

(See page 150)

# G W E N D A

BY

MABEL BARNES GRUNY

AUTHOR OF

"HAZEL OF HEATHERLAND," "DORIS A. G.

"HILARY ON HER OWN," ETC.

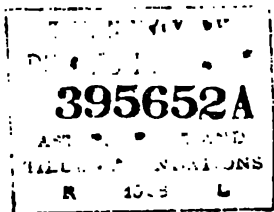
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WROX  
1894  
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TO HER  
WHO BY HER WORDS AND DEEDS REFUTES  
ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID OF  
MOTHERS-IN-LAW

28 X 504



**G W E N D A**



## LETTER I

HOTEL DES ÉTRANGERS,  
ST. LUNAIRE, BRITTANY, May 29th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

When you command, I always obey. Perhaps you haven't noticed this, but it is true nevertheless. And I don't think I am actually colourless, but easily led by people I love.

You asked me to write a bit of something to you every day, now that we are parted. A bit about myself and my experiences in this new, strange, happy life.

"You probably won't post all that you write," you observed in your wise way, "because yours is a temperament that allows itself and its speech and its pen to run away with it. But the mere fact of seeing your emotions inscribed in black and white will not only be a relief to your pent up feelings but a safety valve. I see breakers ahead. Married life consists mostly of breakers, with here and there a patch of smooth water which, when arrived at by the married voyagers,



## G W E N D A

is rarely enjoyed owing to their exhausted and sea-sick condition. You will probably fling yourself at the first breaker in your usual impetuous manner, and that you won't go under, be submerged completely, is my earnest prayer."

And two scraps of advice you also gave me in reference to my prospective outpourings: "Write simply and without a lot of word verbiage and embellishment. I always skip long sunsets and drawn out moonrises. Use a word of one syllable instead of two if it expresses your meaning equally well. And don't write reams about the perfection of your husband, because the probability is that in a couple of months' time you will find him very much the same as other men, if no worse. With feet of most ordinary clay, an uncontrolled temper, and little sense of humour. If you pull through the first year of your married life fairly comfortably, the probability is, you'll get through fifty quite happily. It is usually during the first few months that the disillusionment and trouble begin. So if you accept the fact, right away, that your husband is no better if no worse than other men, you are starting with a better equipment than a woman who has taken first class

## G W E N D A

honours in mathematics, and has a complete knowledge of every language both Ancient and Modern at her finger ends."

How have you learnt this wisdom, I wonder? And why do you so much dislike men, I still more wonder? And have been wondering all my life.

You never meant me to get married if you could possibly prevent it. There was Tommy Renshaw—a dear boy, but you said he was too fat, would snore in his sleep, and have an apoplectic fit before he was fifty. Tommy was told to go. Then there was Bertram Izard. You said he was a bad shape, his feet too long, and that his legs, which bent like reeds in a wind, reminded you of the admonition of the Psalmist: "Neither put ye your trust in any man's legs." Bertram followed Tommy. And then came Lionel, and you used to say that when I pronounced his name my voice reminded you of angels, prophets, martyrs, virgins, and things of that description, why, I cannot imagine. But Lionel did not follow the others. You might make remarks about not trusting a handsome man, or one with black hair and moustache—especially hair that curled—but they fell on deaf ears. I heeded you no longer. Lionel

## G W E N D A

was different from the others, besides he swept me off my feet, taught me the meaning of the word "love." And though I had never meant to marry, never meant to leave you, as you know, Lionel made me unsay and unthink all that I had ever said or thought, with the result that here I am with him in Brittany spending a most delightful honeymoon. But I am not going to rhapsodise, you have barred that, so have no fear my dear Great Aunt. Neither am I going to enter into long descriptions of scenery, so as you are of a practical turn of mind, will you allow me to touch guardedly upon the subject of sea sickness, from which, metaphorically, you predicted I should suffer, and which overtook me in reality on our passage from Southampton to St. Malo? You will have received the picture postcards of the various places we have visited during our ten days over here, but on those postcards I made no mention of my suffering in crossing, it was not that I forgot, for the memory of it darkened my mental horizon for many days, but such a painful subject was not for the eyes of old Hannah. As we well know old Hannah not only reads all postcards addressed to Sunset, but discusses the matter of them calmly and without shame.

## GWENDA

By the way, how is she treating you? Write and tell me that she is not making you eat stewed rhubarb *every* day at dinner, and insisting upon your using it up for supper. How we hated using up things, especially cold suet pudding, and how many things in a small ménage seem to want using up.

But to return to my sea sickness, as I say, such a distressing subject was not for the eyes of old Hannah, who would eat roast pork and Devonshire cream in an equinoctial gale off the Bay of Biscay.

I felt very ashamed of myself, because the sea was almost calm, and I had taken two doses of the *mal-de-mer* remedy in the train, and when I got into my bunk I lay with my head flat, and my eyes shut, so that I should not *see* the motion of the boat, and my ears stuffed with cotton wool so that I should not *hear* it, and my nose covered with an eau-de-Cologne handkerchief so that I should not *smell* it, and the port-hole wide open so that the fresh air should blow upon me. In fact, I did everything that Mrs. Tiddlegate found of use on her voyage from India, and I repeated poetry and other things to myself in a crooning whisper. And it was really Lionel who brought things to

## G W E N D A

a crisis because he shook me, and made me remove the cotton wool from my ears to listen to him. It appears he had been shouting at me for ten minutes to know if I had any objection to the port-hole being closed as he was shivering with cold.

"If you shut the port-hole I shall die," I said, pushing the wool back into my ears, and closing my eyes tightly; and it is unnecessary to give particulars of what happened next because it would be unpicturesque and not interesting.

Some hours later a kind stewardess dressed me, took my waving shoes from me and placed them on my feet, pushed my uncertain hair-pins and hat pins into my head, which I bore without a groan owing to my excessive weakness, dragged me up on deck to the blinding light of day, placed me in a low chair and in my husband's hands, and with annoying cheerfulness told me I should soon be better, and bustled away.

I lay for a few minutes with my eyes shut as the light was intolerable, and then Lionel's voice came to me as from a great distance: "Have you still got your ears plugged up with wool, dearest?"

I shook my head.

## G W E N D A

"We are nearing St. Malo."

If he had informed me we were nearing the Kingdom of Heaven I should have remained unmoved.

"You are feeling better now, are you not? The water is as calm as a duck pond, and the morning is lovely—really hot."

With vague hands I drew my rug more closely around me. The icy coldness of sea sickness makes you wonder if you are still alive, or already passed to the first place of torture.

"I never imagined for a moment that you would be like this," he observed next, and quite reproachfully.

"Like what?" I demanded suddenly opening my eyes.

"Oh—ill. It is so ordinary. I imagined you so much superior to the average girl in every respect, Gwenda."

I was so amazed that I got well at once.

"Sea sickness is not under one's control," I said, nettled.

"Oh, yes it is to a certain extent. You became ill through taking that remedy, and stuffing your ears with wool, and being chilled to the bone by the night air. Now if you had

## G W E N D A

forced your attention upon some particular subject——”

“I did,” I interrupted, “I repeated some lines over and over to myself——”

“What were they?”

“I’m not sure if I’m well enough to say them, but I’ll try.”

“Have some breakfast first dear,” he suggested solicitously. “Some tea and toast. I had mine an hour ago, and you must be hungry.”

I shuddered at the bare thought of food, and began my lines: “‘How much wood could a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood? Why just as much wood as a woodchuck could chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood.’ I tried to get the whole said between each lurch of the boat,” I explained.

“I don’t wonder you were ill.” Then he slightly turned his head and closed his eyes.

“Are you ill too, dear?” I whispered, trying to keep the hope out of my voice that he was. For had he not hinted that I had been commonplace?

“Oh, no,” he replied, “but the colour of your face doesn’t tone with your hat.”

At first I gasped. Then I laughed outright.

## G W E N D A

We had been married under a week and I offended his artistic sensibility, and yet I felt simply inclined to laugh. It was so ridiculous and so nice and frank of him. It showed the good terms we were on with one another—the *bonne camaraderie*. That to me is the ideal of married happiness—good comrades and lovers, lovers and good comrades from the beginning to the end.

I should have hated Lionel had he set me up on a pedestal and worshipped me from afar. Pedestals are such chilly isolated places where all the draughts of the world do congregate. I want to be loved and folded in warm human arms in an ordinary flesh and blood manner: kissed and smacked, petted and scolded, admired and criticised and found fault with. Not treated as a goddess, but as a very human woman. And as I desire to be loved, so I want to love my husband. Each of us seeing the other's faults, but viewing them tenderly and mercifully, and loving each other not in spite of them, but with them.

Your reiterated suggestions that a day would come when I should alight upon the discovery that Lionel was just an ordinary mortal have often made me smile. Smile at your want of dis-



## G W E N D A

cernment in not recognising that this fact has been known to me all along. An ordinary mortal, yes, most assuredly, but just a little bit nicer, a little more attractive, a little bit more interesting and certainly a little bit cleverer than most, for has he not discovered the desirability of me? But there, I am again getting on to the subject of Lionel, and you must be kind and make allowances for me. It is difficult when you have been married for only ten days not to allow your husband to fill up the landscape.

But because I am so happy, do not for one moment think that I am forgetting you. In fact tucked away right at the back of my heart there is a little sensation of pain that I am unable to see you—say, for five minutes on each beautiful day. It just mars the perfection of everything. It is the first time since you took me into your home that you and I have been separated for more than a day. Then I was a little girl of seven, as thin as a lath and as ugly as sin—according to old Hannah, who prides herself on speaking the truth—in a black frock that was too long for me, because I recollect you ran a tuck in it the following day, and a white tucker that scrubbed my throat. And

## G W E N D A

you placed me on a high-backed chair and presented me with a bun and a glass of milk and admonished me never to forget to pray for my two deceased parents who were in Heaven, every morning and night of my life.

That was sixteen years ago, and like Stevenson I can truthfully and gladly say that "my whole life has been better to me than any poem." And you and I have had some gay times together, haven't we? Old Hannah may be under the impression that you are everything a gentle well-behaved economical mistress ought to be, but you are lawless at heart and a thorough pagan. You and I have kicked over the traces at times, though, of course, you wouldn't admit it. But you will recollect the occasion quite recently upon which we went to Exeter and enjoyed a five course lunch and a half flask of Chianti! Also with what brazenness and shamelessness you ordered scrambled eggs for our supper that evening because we were 'so hungry.' Even old Hannah was cheated and forbore to refer to the extravagance of a 'high' supper.

I am not going to end this with 'Your loving Gwenda,' because if the spirit moves me I will add a little to it to-morrow, and a little

## G W E N D A

more the following day, and so on, and then when my screed has become of portentous size and length, I will despatch it in a long fat envelope.

June 2nd.—I am sitting on the hotel verandah at Cancale just above the sea. How can I conjure up the picture? I don't care a jot about your interdict that I should avoid all mention of scenery and places, because this is something quite exceptional. And I know you really love to hear about the out-of-the-way corners of the world you yourself have not visited, wide traveller though you have been. Take for granted that the sea is calm and blue with the matchless blue of the reflection of a cloudless June sky. Away far out against the horizon Mont St. Michel stands dimly reflected through a soft filmy haze. All is very still in this peaceful little Cancale. The white gulls wheel and float and drop noiselessly on to the sea. The air is sweet and fresh with all the freshness that is born of the sea and the earth in early summer. Air that has absorbed some of the fragrance of the little yellow vetches nodding on the cliffs, and of the honeysuckle flinging its creamy trumpets over the hedge close by.

## G W E N D A

Lionel has sauntered away to some rock to take photographs. M. le propriétaire is gently dozing behind his paper at the far end of the verandah. He is presumably concealed behind one of the curtains, but a frolicsome little breeze has whisked it away, and, should an energetic young person who successfully manages him along with everything else in the establishment come this way, there will be ructions.

M. le propriétaire understands not a word of English, and our French is so sketchy and unreliable that at meals I secrete a small dictionary on my knee beneath the table, and while Marie, our pretty waitress, is removing the omelette dish to the back regions, I am able to concoct a very creditable sentence ere she returns, which I deliver in the airy fashion of one with half-a-dozen languages at her finger tips. But yesterday Marie discovered my ignorance. You are aware of my absorbing curiosity, and I was anxious to learn the relationship of the managing young person and M. le propriétaire. For she comes to us at meals with a solicitous air and, in a perfect torrent of almost unintelligible French, demands if our food is giving us complete satisfaction.

Of course, we say *Bon. Très bon*, and won-

## G W E N D A

der who she is. She expresses her delight and goes away to stir up Monsieur from one of his dozes.

"*Elle est la parent de Monsieur,*" said Marie in reply to my question.

"Which?" I cried in astonishment, while Lionel lit a cigarette and gazed thoughtfully at the sea. Have you ever observed that men refuse to be surprised at anything?

Marie repeated her statement.

"*Impossible,*" I pronounced with emphasis. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Monsieur looks 105," I said in my best French. I meant 65.

She *now* stared at me.

"And the young person—I mean *la dame* looks 25."

"*Elle est la parent de Monsieur,*" Marie repeated obstinately, whisked away the dishes and went for the dessert.

Cautiously I drew forth my dictionary. "*Parent*—" Marie caught me. I pretended not to have been caught, and laid the book aside as though it were the last thing I wished to consult.

"*Elle est la parent de Monsieur,*" she murmured, with a gleam of mischief in her dark eyes.

## G W E N D A

“*Très bien!* I don’t care if she is the parent of twins of Monsieur’s age and appearance. It is nothing to me,” I said, motioning to her that she might go. And don’t you agree with me in thinking it ridiculous that a parent and a cousin and all sorts of obscure relationships are one and the same thing in this language? I *do* like simplicity above all things.

It was I who discovered Cancale, famous according to the guide books for nothing but its oyster beds. “Let us go and see it,” I suggested. So we drove over from St. Malo, a long and most uninteresting drive, and Lionel was just observing that it appeared to be the end of everything and his face was settling down to one of gloom, when we turned a corner and below us lay Cancale and the hotel which you have to enter *through the roof*. Can you imagine the fascination of this? Down the cliffs you go, along a zig-zag path above the sea, a narrow path with banks and tall grasses on either side till you stumble across a flight of steps. Descend these carefully, because they are very steep, and you come to a romantic looking door with a clanging sort of dinner bell which warns M. le propriétaire of your proximity. Now you are on the flat roof of the ho-

## G W E N D A

tel, enter another door-way straight in front of you, and you are in the cool interior with flight upon flight of well-carpeted stairs to descend till you reach the salons and the sunny verandah, and the sea lazily lapping your feet.

The tide has just turned, and so swiftly does it run out that soon the oyster beds will be revealed, and as from nowhere scores of fishermen and women will have sprung, busy at work, raking, sorting, dredging, cleaning the succulent bivalve, making ready for the autumn when it will be exported all over France. The women chiefly at this, for the men have gone earlier in their small brown boats to the lower beds quite a long way out, and will again have to wait for the turn of the tide to drift them and their cargo along the little channels and staked-in alley-ways to the women.

June 4th.—I have little to add to my letter. This has been a day of strong sunshine and fresh wind, and white foamy clouds racing along the blue of Heaven, and white foamy waves breaking against the foot of the verandah. It is all delicious, and my body feels so light and airy that I keep racing along the cliffs, racing the foamy clouds and the occa-

## GWENDA

sional shadows. How wonderful is the exhilaration of the sea! Even now I can recall my sensation when I arrived at Silvercombe and first caught sight of it from my little bedroom window. "Is it true?" I whispered, fearing it would evaporate before my eyes, and you laughed and kissed me and opened the window wide to let in all its salt freshness and sweetness. And to-day I am loving it with such intensity that, like the great poet of the sea, I sing:

"I will go back to the great sweet Mother,  
Mother and lover of men, the Sea.  
I will go down to her, I and none other;  
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me."

And Lionel says I am mad, quite mad, and I only laugh.

Always your loving

GWENDA.



## LETTER II

BELLE VUE HOTEL, CANCALE,  
BRITTANY, June 6th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Lionel says I must come and bathe. We can't manage this in front of the hotel, even at high tide, because of the oyster beds. M. le propriétaire pretends we can and points to two vans moored below the verandah. But we shake our heads and decline to be impaled on the staked-in enclosures.

So we wander up the stairs, and through the roof and up more stairs and along the cliffs toward Port Maire; gowns and towels slung across our shoulders, a *galette* for our lunch or preliminary lunch—for we have only had coffee and rolls—in Lionel's pocket, and a *galette* made in this part of Brittany is quite too delicious; over the short crisp grass bestarred with tiny sea flowers, and oh, the sounds and scents of everything. What a beautiful summer world! My own happiness frightens me. "Man was born to sorrow," I say to myself,

## G W E N D A

and at the same time sting my bare hand badly with a nettle, and Lionel laughs at my discomforture.

Presently we drop down the cliffs to a little secluded cove, where there is not a creature to be seen, only the white-sailed fishing boats in the distance running before the breeze. I enter my cave into which the sunshine filters, and leisurely undress, scrunching the warm, yellow sand with my bare toes. Then the rush down to the water's edge, picking my way in and out of the sharp little stones, for bathing in shoes is to me like going to bed in gloves, and the plunge into the cool bracing sea. Lionel is kind enough to admire my swimming, and allows himself to be raced, and saved from drowning, and seized by the hair, and dragged through the water, and says what chance has he a Londoner born against a Devonshire South Coast girl?

He remarked this morning, were we partaking of our *petit déjeuner*, that he could not understand my choosing the coast of Brittany for a honeymoon—especially in June, when it is so empty—seeing that I have always lived at a quiet seaside place, when I might have gone to Paris. And he pronounced “Paris” as

## G W E N D A

a prospector shouts "gold." And I said we would go another time to Paris. And, somehow, I couldn't explain that I wanted to be *alone* in the country with him in these first few weeks, to show him the things I loved, with only the wind and the larks and the tender newly-opened leaves and flowers as companions in our wanderings. Soon I shall be in the whirl of a London Season receiving callers, returning calls. Entertaining and being entertained. Going to balls, concerts, theatres, flower shows, race meetings, regattas. At least Lionel says I shall go to them, so I suppose I shall. And I shall put on a brave face, have a long train, and try to enjoy myself.

If Lionel be a Society Man, I must be a Society Woman. Can you picture your Gwenda in such a position? Long ago I realised that when Lionel piped I should dance, dance till my legs dropped off.

I can hear you say "bosh."

But it is so. My husband has a way with him, as old Hannah says, that I cannot resist. He gets round me. I say I won't do a thing. and the next moment I am doing it, and not only doing it, but glorying in it.

And now you will say I am a fool, floppy

## G W E N D A

and characterless. Granty, I admit the impeachment.

As evening approaches I say "Shall we stroll along the quay and watch the return of the fishing boats?"

And my lord assents. So I don my white woolly coat, for muslins, by the sea, are airy, diaphanous garments, and we descend the broad steps of the verandah, not up through the roof this time, and M. le propriétaire, who is always on the verandah, watches us walk through the garden with its prim French beds and tufts of pampas grass, to the little parade. First we pause in front of a monster tin fish which spreads its fins and tail across the front of a black, tarred wooden shanty, advertising the fact that 'Un parent, (the same old *parent* turned up again) un ami recevra avec plaisir la succulent huitre de Cancale. Expedition immediate. Dégustation sur le parc, (that's the bit I like) Votre serviteur Lehoerff Pierre fils, 74, Quai de la Houle, Cancale.' Lehoerff Pierre fils appears from the doorway behind the tail of the fish, a swarthy, good-looking fellow, and presses some of his advertising bills upon us. There can be no dégustation sur le

## G W E N D A

parc to-night, for the month, being minus an R, is not accommodating. Then we wander past the little jetty at the corner, and the shop which sells fully-rigged Breton boats at 50 centimes apiece. Past the Café with the smiling rosy-cheeked girl who gives us after dinner coffee in conjunction with a lesson in French. She is patient and optimistic and full of hope that my tongue will circumvent absinthe before we leave the place for good. Past the little hotel with its ambitious appellation of Hotel de l'Europe, past the Café des Étrangers, and the Café des Pêcheurs till we come to the Calvary Square. And here again we come to pause to gaze at the drooping, sorrowful figure of the Christ dyed blood-red in the rays of the sinking sun. Then again past the boat-building yard, and two or three more cafés, and nets spread everywhere and anywhere to dry, till we come to the further jetty and the scrap of beach with its shell-strewn surface as finely powdered as pearl dust. Here drawn up in a line, with their backs to the wall, are the housewives ready to do a haggle as soon as the fish is landed. A fine race these Breton peasant women with their black hair braided so neatly, and their dark eyes and fine foreheads and

## G W E N D A

level eyebrows. And how infinitely more picturesque than our own poor women, in their snowy caps and short skirts and jerseys and sabots; and what pleasant low-toned voices and musical laughs!

Now the boats are in, and the scene becomes an animated one. Fish are tossed about from hand to hand. A woman weighing a large conger up and down with thoughtful air, abstractedly brushes her baby's sleeping face with its moving tail. The sun, with a last dying effort, floods the sky and sea and harbour with a wondrous light, and the whole scene becomes one of magical beauty. The men and women begin to move away, some of them wheeling barrows of fish, others arm in arm with baskets and babies perched on their shoulders. A hard, perhaps, but a wholesome and beautiful life to those who love to dwell in the clean wind-cleansed places of the earth. And they looked happy, happy and contented.

So absorbed had I been in the scene that I forgot Lionel, forgot everything, and as the woman with the conger eel and the baby passed me, I spoke to her and patted the baby's fishy cheek.

"Yes, it is a very fine one," she said with

## G W E N D A

pride, in patois French, and I wasn't sure if she were referring to her offspring or the eel.

"Gwenda!" Lionel's voice sounded tired. "Are you ready? I have had enough of this, and I am so hungry. Come away."

And reluctantly I turned about.

The harbour light suddenly twinkled forth. More lights shone from the row of little cafés. The day was done. The golden splendour had gone, the amber and rose had faded from the sky. A soft velvety twilight was stealing o'er the land, and a hush—as though the earth was still holding its breath at the glory of the sunset—brooded over the sea.

In silence we wended our way back to the hotel. My heart was too full for words. Too full of the beauty and gladness of life, for joy is very close to tears.

June 7th.—We leave for England to-morrow. Will there be a budget from you awaiting me? I have received three scrubby postcards from you since I left you. Your refusal to *bother* me with letters on my honeymoon was simply a neat way of getting out of writing on thin foreign paper which is an abomination to your soul.

## G W E N D A

Did the possibility of writing on ordinary paper never strike you? Or had old Hannah forbidden or objected to the extra postage which would be incurred thereby?

Granty, you are not to permit old Hannah to boss you. I have been saying this ever since I knew you, and with little result. You say I am weak because when in your or Lionel's hands I am like melted candle grease. While *you, you* in the hands of Hannah are like the grease when it has been wiped up!

I am longing for all your news. I hope you are not lonely, dear one. And yet, selfish pig that I am, I like to think that you miss me the tiniest fraction. You are only my Great Aunt—not a very near relation—and yet I have never felt like a great niece, nor any other form of niece to you. Neither have I felt like a daughter, nor a grand-daughter, nor a sister—simply a friend, and your very own loving Gwenda.

To-day I am longing for a sight of your pink shawl, the best one which exactly matches the colour of your cheeks, and for your black silk apron with its narrow elastic waistband and jet button. Nobody but you ever wore so tricky and dainty an apron, or one that possessed a



## G W E N D A

roomier pocket. It grieves me to think that there are no old ladies in London who wear rich black silk aprons. I have asked Lionel if there is the faintest possibility of such a thing; and he says not the faintest.

London is beginning to alarm me, but I hide it behind a brave front. I remember your words: "Unsophistication and gaucherie are forgivable in a girl, but unpardonable in a married woman."

I enquired of Lionel the names of his servants as we were returning from bathing just now. And the butler, who has been in his service for ten years, is called Balbriggan, and the footman Hillingbran—a bit muddling.

I have been since practising saying (under my breath) "Home, Hillingbran," when he closes the door of my carriage, "Harrods' Stores, Hillingbran." And I hope I shan't drop one of the H's in my excitement. I wish Lionel wasn't rich. I think above everything else I would like my husband to have been a gypsy with a caravan. I should have been more than content to sit at his side, my legs dangling, feather brooms and carpet whisks bobbing behind us swinging through leafy lanes, a camp fire at night, just the two of us, and the

## G W E N D A

stars overhead. But I am afraid he is not cut out for camp life. He is so particular, and Bodkins, his man, is awful. I mean awful in his primness, from what I can gather.

As I didn't bring a maid away, not possessing one, Lionel didn't bring Bodkins, and I imagine it has been the greatest sacrifice of his life. But could you imagine a honeymoon with a person named Bodkins in the background? I couldn't. It would take away all the romance. So I have packed for Lionel. He is very helpless, and was so worried over it that I cleared him away and took possession of his suit cases and portmanteaux. I feel it will be ages before I have the opportunity of doing anything for him again with the prospect of all those servants staring me in the face, and it was the touching and handling of his clothes that suddenly made me wish that he had been a hawker.

Presently we are motoring to Mont St. Michel, and will it disappoint me when I see it close at hand? For distance has lent it enchantment, and out of the blue haze it has stood forth a dream-like monument, mystical against the inarticulate line of sky and sea mystical and misunderstandable. And it is so often thus with reality; only anticipation and retro-

## G W E N D A

spection bring us absolutely unalloyed pleasure because of the power we possess, that has been given to most of us, of wiping away all sorrow from the past and seeing no pain in the future. I believe it was you who suggested this to me, and I often find myself cribbing your ideas. Few of us remember anything but the joys of our childish days. We forget the weary lessons on summer afternoons, the punishments for our misdoing, the awful dark nights when the wind and bogies were whistling at the windows and down the chimneys and under the doors and we dived our heads beneath the bed clothes, only coming up when suffocation was imminent. We forget the ink on our pinafores and the awful moment of confession to the particular Olympian set in authority over us. We forget the tight painful curl rags at night—when our heads seemed to be resting on swollen chestnuts—and the scrubby frilly tuckers in our necks, and the being ordered to bed when the fire was burning its brightest and we were at full length face downward on the white bear-skin rug and had arrived at exactly the most thrilling point in our story. We only recollect the glorious days when we fished and bathed and rolled in the hay, and had camp

## G W E N D A

fires on desert islands in the proximity of the rhubarb bed. When we had cream with our strawberries, and Castle pudding with sherry sauce on our birthdays. When we discovered the first wren's nest in the violet bank, and the first swallow's beneath the eaves of the barn. When we had log fires at Christmas and carols; and paste-egging at Easter with five thrilling black-faced men in the kitchen, Lord Nelson with a bunch of blue ribbons down to his knee; and a jolly Jack Tar; and a lady so fine (a black-faced man in a bonnet and shawl was exciting beyond description), and lastly, Toss-pot, Toss-pot with a long straw tail and a tall hat and a wicked expression! Even now I shudder when I think of Toss-pot.

And so it is with anticipation. Don't we all build our castle in Spain? A goodly pile of fair stone and marble and alabaster, without flaw or crack. No cheap glazed yellow bricks and unsatisfactory mortar, but a graceful monument showing up its pure outline against the blue of the sky.

Ah, how my own days spread before me with Lionel—a crescendo of pure unalloyed happiness. Not that I am not enjoying the present, the actual to-day. My spirits are so great—

## G W E N D A

and everyone knows how uplifted I can get on occasions—that I have great ado to keep from laughing when there is nothing to laugh at; but how many of us really live at the moment? Take for example my walk along the cliffs with Lionel an hour ago. I was enjoying the braced-up sensation of my body after bathing, when the flesh is cool yet tingly, alert yet serenely reposeful, I was loving the warmth of the sunshine through my thin cotton clothing, the springiness of the turf beneath my feet, the light on the wide sea, the gentle rhythmic sound of breaking waves, the scent of summer o'er the land, the soft shiver of the south wind through a field of rye a foot above the ground. I know now I was happily conscious of it all, I am *looking back*. But at the time I was busily talking with Lionel of our *future* life in town, of our amusements, entertainments, river parties, dinners, balls. I was hardly realising the ecstasy of the moment. How I prose on! The beauty of life and this world has got into my veins, intoxicating me after the fashion of heady old port. I just like to sit and sit on this sunny verandah with Lionel somewhere close at hand. With M. le propriétaire dozing behind his paper; with the *parent* bustling

## GWENDA

about achieving more noise than work; with Marie offering you *oeufs à la coque*, and *oeufs sur le plat*, and *oeufs pochés*, and *oeufs brouillés*; and with Jacques raking away at the gravel in the prim garden below, raking slowly and methodically without haste and over-much energy; for "what need is there for energy?" his placid back seems to enquire, "the day is warm and life is long. The *parent* bustles, there is not room for two to make a fussation."

Lionel bids me put on my hat and coat. The motor which is to bear us on our excursion is snorting below. M. le propriétaire has wakened up guiltily for the *parent's* eye is upon him. Glad of an excuse for his existence he has procured me a large envelope for the enclosure of this rambling epistle. If you only like the practical bits of it, skip the sentimental. But recollect you offered to be a dumping ground for all my moods and tenses; and I have taken you at your word.

Your loving

GWENDA.

## LETTER III

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, S. W.;

June 14th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

A week has elapsed since my last, and never a moment to send you my greetings.

It was like a bit of home to find your letter awaiting me. I was depressed, can you imagine it? I arrived at Waterloo cold, squeamish, and with my hat on one side. Lionel told me of it, and I said "Does it matter? I can still feel the boat rocking." I raised my right leg high as I spoke, feeling I was climbing up the side of the deck, and Lionel was quite shocked and whispered that Hillingbran was staring at me. Hillingbran and a coachman seated on the box of a gorgeous carriage were awaiting us. "Do you mean the 'Home, Hillingbran' man?" I asked feebly, and Lionel with an astonished look simply pushed me into the carriage without replying.

"You will look better when you have had a bath and a change," he observed presently.

## G W E N D A.

"Am I as bad as that?" I enquired.

"If only your hat would keep straight," his tone was depressed.

I gave it a vicious push, and for the first time since our marriage felt cross.

A whole retinue of servants received us in the hall and did obeisance before us. And I felt sorry I had worn my second best coat and skirt.

Then your letter was handed to me on an enormous silver salver.

Granty you never told me if one should thank servants when they present you with things on silver salvers, or just receive them with a careless nod. I wanted badly to squeeze Balbriggan's hand, I was so frightfully glad to have your letter, but he looked forbidding.

I felt strange and shaky in my new surroundings; the hall seemed so large and I felt so thin, as I had had another bad passage, and my feet still had a tendency to raise themselves very high as I walked up the wide staircase, trying not to mind the disappointment of the servants, writ large on their faces, in this new mistress of theirs.

Your letter, crushed tightly in my cold hand, supported me a little, and as soon as I reached



## G W E N D A

my room I fell to devouring it, and then to laughing.

My poor dear, you must not allow yourself to be bullied by Hannah. You mustn't be meek now that you are without my help and protection. You must make a firm stand at the beginning. Your fear of most women and courage with *all* men has always been a matter of surprise to me. Now that over a hundred and fifty miles divide Hannah and me, I feel as brave as a lion, and if she were here at this moment I believe I should find courage to say: "Peace varlet—" No varlet means a man, "peace woman! I command thee to hold thy tongue." Wouldn't Hannah nearly burst from surprise?

I am sorry Stringer has been tiresome over the packing of the wedding presents. If he ran out of straw, why couldn't he use something else? The Silvercombe natives *are* so obstinate. I hope it has not worried you. Give him beans with my compliments. I wonder what you are doing at this moment. I picture you in your old garden hat with the little scraggy feather that once was black and is now a rusty brown. What a battered disgraceful thing that hat is! And you have five others put away in

## G W E N D A

the spare-room wardrobe. I have lately discovered your motive for 'saving things up.' It is that if you wait long enough, your garments become again fashionable. Tight sleeves were worn some years ago, tight sleeves are 'in' again—your foulard has become up-to-date. You are very tricky and clever!

I have oceans of things to tell you. But where to begin I know not, and I shall never get it all in for I have scarcely had five minutes the whole week in which to breathe. We have torn about from morning till night. Been in a constant state of 'rush.' And that is the correct thing to be in Town. Everybody you meet pants. "My dear I am simply rushed off my legs." They fly from one enjoyment to another. They tell you with beaming smiles they are perfect rags. Perhaps feeling raggy is much nicer than it sounds. They tick their engagements off their fingers with the same pride as an Indian war chief counts his scalps. Presumably their popularity and social standing are denoted by the number of their engagements. I thought I was a strong girl, but I can truthfully say that at the end of three days I, too, felt a "perfect rag," and not a cheerful beaming one like the other rags, but a worn-out

## G W E N D A

old dish cloth. The only people I have met up to now who appear to have any leisure are the servants. My dear Granty, the butler's walk is a poem, a Mendelssohn's Song without words; the leisureliness of it, the reposefulness, bring such a sense of serenity and peace to me, that I, for one, will never need a rest cure. And the tone in which he says: "Certainly, Madame," embraces all the harmony and modulation of which the human voice is capable, not caressing and not exactly subservient, but just right. And when he announces "dinner is served," I feel he ought by rights to be saying: "Come into the garden Maud," or "Drink to me only with thine eyes," no, that comes when he is placing the port and liqueurs on the table.

I managed "Home, Hillingbran" right away the first time without so much as a tremor, though I must confess I said it in the wrong place because I really wanted to go to the Army & Navy Stores, but I daren't alter it. A coachman and a footman's backs seem so forbidding when they exactly match and fill up the whole of the landscape.

I have a victoria, a pair of bays, a motor brougham and a King Charles spaniel all to myself, and I am terrified of the lot. Most of

## G W E N D A

all of the King Charles because he bites when his muzzle is off.

Lionel suggested I should have something to drive with me, and when I said—perhaps a little wistfully, which was foolish of me because, of course, he's busy like everybody else—"Won't *you* be coming with me?" he seemed quite surprised and reminded me that his mornings were crammed up. He went on to say that a King Charles was always fashionable. Black poms and Schipperkes and pugs and various other small dogs might have a vogue for a time, but a King Charles was the most reliable, and he would get me one with a long pedigree. For a moment I thought he was only joking, but catching sight of his face I saw he was quite serious, and suddenly I felt dazed. What queer world was this into which I had stepped? Or was it that I was queer and the world normal? I felt I would like to get away into some wide space such as the moors at Blackhill and think things out. But Lionel was talking away quite gravely and I had to recall my wandering attention. "Some women have pet monkeys," he was saying, "but they are a little uncertain. Mrs. Fairbridger's grabbed at her veil the other after-

## G W E N D A

noon when she was driving in the Park, tore it off and removed one of her curls with it. Mrs. Fairbridger was furious, and it was an awkward moment for her and the spectators. I believe she had the monkey killed."

"Why not a mongoose?" I suggested, stifling something between a laugh and a scream.

Lionel examined me carefully, as though trying to read my countenance, but finding I was perfectly grave he replied, "I am not sure that I know what a mongoose is."

"It's an ichneumon, and comes from India, and is dead on snakes."

"Oh," said he, "I hardly think it would do as a carriage companion though it would be very original; better stick to a King Charles."

And I know he suggested the whole thing because he doesn't want me to feel "out of it" or lonely. If it is the fashion for women to drive with monkeys and poodles and cockatoos and squirrels, I must do likewise. He *is* so thoughtful and considerate.

So my King Charles has arrived and is called Chandy or Shandy for short, and is simply a detestable little brute. He bit Hillingbran the first time he was lifted into the carriage, and Hillingbran dropped him on to the pavement

## G W E N D A

like a hot potato, and I hoped he was killed outright, but he wasn't, and actually started on Hillingbran's legs. So now he always wears a muzzle, and I am hoping that he will soon die from over-eating.

During the last two days about a hundred of Lionel's friends have called, and I'm nearly worn to a shadow, and my smile has become permanently fixed. You know the sort of inane society smile, mirthless and horrid. I'm not unfriendly and I'm not churlish, but to be introduced to a hundred new people at one fell blow is exhausting. Do you remember on our last "At Home" day at Silvercombe how wildly dissipated we felt because we had seven callers?

I wondered how all these people knew we were back, and it appears that Lionel sent cards out sometime ago, announcing that I should be "At Home" on the 13th and 14th of June.

"But supposing we had lengthened our honeymoon," I suggested.

"But we shouldn't. We had no intention of missing half the Season."

"I shouldn't have cared," I sighed. "Lionel, I am terrified at the thought of all these people." And he told me not to be silly, he

## G W E N D A

would help me, and I must wear one of my prettiest gowns—white for choice—and just be my own bright self and everybody would be charmed.

This was rather cheering. I wore my *broderie Anglaise*, perhaps it was a bit too starchy, for it appears to be the fashion in London to resemble a sinuous caterpillar, but I can truthfully say I never saw an assemblage look less charmed with anybody. Have you ever tried to be bright? Bright, for an occasion? *Don't*. You feel like a smiling Hindoo god, or a lady missionary. Seventeen people asked me for my opinion of the Academy, and I was still bright at the seventeenth. Six enquired if I considered ordinary or auction bridge the better game; and eleven wanted to know if I had seen "The Blushing Belle of Berlin." Nobody waited for a reply. Whether they thought from my appearance that I should be unequal to an intelligent discussion of any subject, I am not prepared to say, but, at a bound, they one and all rushed away from the Academy, bridge, and the theatre, and started on aeroplanes, North Pole exploration, the Liberal government, the super-tax, novels by Egbert Bales, and Laurence Hope's poetry. Nobody listened to any-

## G W E N D A

body, everybody shouted, and they all seemed quite happy. So I stopped being "bright," and made a good tea. And when a pale stout man asked me if I liked and understood "the Curse of London," the picture of the year, I replied that I was sure he really didn't want to know, and wouldn't he have a mustard and cress sandwich instead.

Lionel must have overheard me, for he reproved me later, quite nicely and kindly. It appears the stout man was Sir William Wilbraham, an M.P., a millionaire, and owner of one of the finest collections of pictures in London. I expressed my sorrow, and I really *was* sorry; and to-day I have merely smiled and said nothing. And at the end of an hour's time I heard a man say to a pretty girl that I appeared to be very immature, but amiable. A pleasant thing to have said about you! Don't you think?

One fact I *have* learned, namely, that my husband was one of the most sought after bachelors in London. And you and I never dreamed of such a thing. *We* were immature, weren't we? But if he had not possessed a sixpence, it would have been all the same to me. He should have shared the bit that father left



## G W E N D A

me in consols. And had we been obliged to earn our livings, make our bread and butter, I shouldn't have minded, and I needn't then have kept a King Charles spaniel.

June 16th.—Fanchette has just left me with my head in the dust. She is my French maid—a most elegant and fashionable creature with a French figure, a rustling silk petticoat, and a high-pitched shrill voice.

This is the hour of leisure which I have determined to snatch from the “rush of life.” One must read and think occasionally, and Lionel asks why. Women who read are usually pedantic, and women who *think* have hysterics all over the place. *Isn't* he amusing?

My bedroom faces west and is a glory of gold hangings and paper and white paint. And my boudoir is of eastern aspect and is decorated in a green of the coldest Art shade. And Fanchette knowing nothing of my barbaric affection for warm colours and sunshine, cannot imagine why I prefer sitting in my bedroom at this hour. “If it were 5 o'clock in the morning I would sit in the boudoir,” I say, and she shrugs her shoulders at the incomprehensibility of Madame.

## G W E N D A

To be alone is very restful after the hurry and turmoil of the day, and that Fanchette should have broken in upon me just now has irked me not a little. I had instructed her to put out my wedding gown for this evening. We are going to a dinner given in our honour by old friends of Lionel. Up to now I have been wearing my black satin and green span-gled net, as we have been dining at restaurants or quietly at home, but to-night being a sort of state dinner I thought the occasion was worthy of my wedding dress. That is how I put it to myself out of the innocence of my heart, and didn't *you* think it lovely? I know I did. But not so Fanchette. She came to me with it held out at arm's length as though the sight of it offended her vision, and demanded if *that* was what I meant.

"Certainly," I replied, "I have only *one* wedding dress."

"But what sort of a gown is it supposed to be, Madame?"

"Oh, just a simple, pretty, white one," I returned ingratiatingly, for I could see there was trouble ahead.

"But what mode?"

"Why Directoire, of course."

## G W E N D A

"Directoire?" (*shrilly*).

"Certainly."

"Mon Dieu, Madame! With a waist below, right away down where your sto—mach ought to be?"

"My waist is perhaps peculiarly situated," I said with dignity.

"But, no, Madame, your figure is divine. But the waist should be in a Directoire gown just below your arms."

"I absolutely refuse to have my waist anywhere but in its proper place." I picked up my book.

"But I mean in the frock. No matter where your waist really is, in the gown it should be high up."

"Well, isn't it?" I said trying to keep patient.

She drew out the bodice inch by inch as one extends an accordion, and heaved a deep sigh.

"Look at it, so long, so very long. Madame resembles a—a tadpole in it, is it not?"

"Fanchette!" I cried indignantly.

"Ah, pardon, dear Madame. One thousand pardons. I meant not to be impertinent. Madame always looks beau-ti-ful. But what is to be done? Madame cannot wear it as it is, it

## G W E N D A

is impossible. If I could be permitted to alter it."

"Alter it!" I cried joyfully, gathering it up in a bundle and pushing it at her, "do what you will with it, anything you like, Fanchette, so long as you make it right and leave me in peace. Go now straightaway——"

"But one thing more," she interrupted quickly. "It is a high dress. Surely to-night, Madame, a décolleté gown——"

"Ah!" Now I was triumphant, "but it will turn into a décolleté gown. The yoke is only tacked on. In two minutes it can be unpicked and removed, and, hey presto, the transformation is complete."

Fanchette's eyes widened. "A high frock becomes a low one!" Her tone of horror froze even me. "Impossible. Never, Madame, and I have dressed many ladies, have I before come across such a thing extraordinary. A high and a low dress in one—one combination. Everybody would know, I mean the ladies would recognise it if you wore it in the day and then again in the evening. The very thought is—is horrible."

Her genuine distress touched me. And had she not shown some restraint and delicacy of

## G W E N D A

feeling in not alluding to the fact that she had only been accustomed to the handling and hooking up of Worth and Paquin frocks, while the gown she was holding had been fashioned by a small dressmaker in Exeter?

"But what is to be done?" I enquired helplessly. I have only the green spangled net and the black satin, they are both low, always low——"

"I know, Madame," she interrupted hastily, "you have worn them." With one wave of her hand she dismissed them both, and a great depression settled upon me.

I glanced at the timepiece. "Look here, Fanchette," I said, "it is now 6 o'clock. Dinner is at 8, it is impossible to get a new gown made in a couple of hours. I *must* wear the high low frock which isn't Directoire, and in which you suggest, not too politely, that I resemble a tadpole. It cannot be helped. Please go and wrestle with it. To-morrow I will order another." And Fanchette went—a hopeless despairing figure, yet with 'faithful to duty however unpleasant' written on every line of her sallow countenance.

Perhaps she will give me notice to-morrow. I am hoping for the best—not that I dislike her,

## G W E N D A

for, though my experience is limited, I can see that she is an excellent maid; but I realise however much I may blossom forth in the future, however modish I may grow to be, in fine, if I became one of the queens of fashion whose frocks and hats and chiffons are duly chronicled in the papers, the memory of my green spangled net and tadpole wedding gown will never fade from Fanchette's mind. She will in her secret heart regard me as a poor ignorant thing—a product of the country—a sort of pumpkin—to be pitied more than despised.

You must not imagine, Granty darling, that such a matter frets me one little atom. I know that you will be disappointed that my trousseau is turning out to be not smart, but I am only sorry on that account. Remember that Lionel fell in love with me in spite of what I know now was my extreme dowdiness. And, oh, how I enjoyed those plain gowns; and they were always of a pretty becoming colour because whatever you and I may lack in form, I think our colour sense is all right, don't you? At least we will take that small bit of comfort to our hearts. And we had great fun in the choosing of these derided gowns, hadn't we? Fanchette can never wrest that from us. The

## G W E N D A

long days we spent in Exeter, bright delicious Spring days, and the lovely run from Silvercombe along the Exe. I am never quite sure if I liked to find the tide in or out as we sped along in the train, both were so lovely. Then the trying on of the frocks; and how lovely the green spangled net looked as it flashed in the sunlight, and I am not at all sure that it isn't lovely now. Just because Fanchette happens to be French, it doesn't prove she is right. You and I may be as right as she, I shall try to summon up courage to tell her this to-morrow.

Then the dainty lunches at Raleigh's Café, with no Hannah at our elbows making us 'use up' things. And, later on, evensong at the Cathedral, and all the lovely feelings and emotions that come to you in the dim recesses of a Cathedral when a boy's voice soars to Heaven, mounting higher and higher on liquid notes of silver, and a stray gleam of sunlight flashes through the glory of a stained window.

Granty, should you have resented it, had you known that all my thoughts and prayers were for Lionel in those moments? He was absent, therefore I prayed for him. Now he is with me. I can feel him, touch him, love him, and *you* are absent—so I pray for you—just the

## G W E N D A

order of things reversed. You seem to have a certain amount of hold over those who are close to you. You can bind them, nurse them, tease them, quarrel with them. But the absent ones—well they seem so very absent and remote. You receive letters from them telling you of their doings, but you don't get a bit of them, of their real selves, the inflection of their voices, the familiar movement of their hands, the little shake of their walk, the lavender scent of their presence, the feel of their woolly shawls.

Do you go to my little old bed each night, I wonder, and say "One to watch. Two to pray. Three to keep all harm away?" I hope you do, because I am often there in spirit. I shall be there to-night, though at the time I shall be, in all probability, at a bridge table in a hot room with drooping flowers and lovely women in still more lovely gowns and jewels, eager and keen on their game, but with the impassive well-bred look of indifference which the old players can assume. And at 11 o'clock, though my body will be politely responding to my partner's call for a rough, my spirit will steal away out of the room, through the wide star-lit spaces to a cottage at Silvercombe; and *you* must not fail me.

Good night Granty.



## LETTER IV

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, S. W.,

June 19th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I am lonely. Why didn't I marry a poor man who lived in a villa in the suburbs? I long to have a dear little house called St. Kilda, and one maid, and spend my evenings alone with my husband. As it is I scarcely ever see him, and you have always said that half the unhappiness of married life is caused by husbands and wives seeing too much of each other. I find such a lot of your statements are wrong! I, of course, see him in a sense, but always with crowds of people about. I am *so* tired of people. I don't mind them—say, once a day, but I don't want them at lunch and at tea and at dinner. Breakfast I *could* have alone with Lionel, but he makes me have it in bed. He says I shall get fagged out before the summer is over; and as we don't go to Scotland till September I mustn't break down before then. Isn't it an extraordinary way of living? I mean

## G W E N D A

that people should fear a breakdown brought about by over-much so-called pleasure. So I have my breakfast in bed and read the *Morning Post* and wade through our invitations and consult my engagement book. Do you remember *our* old engagement book? You always would enter into it the dates on which the various hens began to sit. It would read as follows: "Tuesday: Tea at the Rectory. Wednesday: Jane Ellis comes to fit my new dress. Friday: Yellow Fluff began to sit. Saturday: Bandy legs hatched 10 chicks." This is a sample of my engagement book: "Wednesday: Two fittings at Valerie Soeurs. Richmond Horse Show. Dine at the Ritz with the Wilbrahams (the man I invited to eat a cress sandwich). Theatre. Thursday: Lunch with the St. Johns. Fête Botanical Gardens. Dinner at the Pelhambys'. Opera. Friday: Meet of the Four-in-hand. Luncheon party at home. At Home at Mrs. Crossfield's. Dine with the Vavasours. Bridge. Saturday: Shop. Lunch with friends at Prince's. Motor to Ranelagh—polo. Dinner party at home. Bridge."

That is to-night—the dinner party. The first we have given. Up to now cook has arranged the few dinners that we have been in to eat.

## G W E N D A

She has been with Lionel for years, in fact ever since his mother died and he came in to everything. But this morning he said he thought it was time I took up the reins of management, that he had wanted me to get accustomed to my new life gradually, but the servants must now recognise that *I* was the mistress.

If only he had given me longer notice I should have been more prepared, could have bought a book and planned out various menus; but as it was, he had hardly finished speaking when a knock came at the door and cook like a large battle ship sailed into the room.

"I will leave you now," said my husband cheerfully. "Bear two things in mind, let the dinner be short and the dishes really good, and original if possible, originality is what we all aim at. Mrs. St. John gives the best dinners of any woman in Town. I want you to come a good second," and humming a little tune he took his departure.

Oh, how I longed to be able to hum too. Carelessly, to impress cook, I tried to take up the refrain, but my voice cracked on the first note, and she regarded me with mild though respectful surprise. She handed me a book

## G W E N D A

and a pencil. It appeared that the various dinners that had been given had been entered here so that there should be no repetition. Unfortunately she had turned over to a blank page and I dared not look back. Feverishly I racked my brains and could conjure up nothing but oyster soup, boiled mutton, and blackberry tart, and neither oysters nor blackberries were in season. Patiently she waited, and at that minute, Granty, I would gladly have been a single woman. Presently I think it began to dawn upon her that I was a hopeless fool. She did not hint at such a condition, but she began to be kind. People are always kind to hopeless fools. She was also clever. When *Potage aux Pointes d'Asperge* was written down, it appeared to have emanated from my own brain; and so on all through the salmon and ducklings and truffles and ice puddings to the weary end. She suggested everything and never let me know it, or thought she didn't. And when we had finished, she respectfully said: "I think the master will be pleased with *your* dinner, Madame, if you will kindly excuse my saying so." Did she take me for a bigger fool than I looked?

She had no sooner gone than there was an-

## G W E N D A

other knock, and Balbriggan appeared. He appeared in the same way that a photograph appears on a plate when washed with chemicals, faintly, slowly, wraith-like. There is something almost uncanny about Balbriggan. This time it was the table decorations. Now I felt more at home. You always admired the vases on our dinner table, and Sunset gave me such a profusion of flowers that I knew exactly how to blend them. Eagerly in my mind I ran through roses, carnations, sweet-peas, and I certainly never thought of Madonna lilies in tall silver vases—the whole scheme white and silver without a touch of colour. But before I knew what had happened Balbriggan was admiring the suggestion. It would be quite unique and unusually beautiful. I looked at him critically, sharply, but his eyes were as non-committal as his person—a sphinx gazing across the arid desert of my stupidity and ignorance.

When he had faded from the room, I sat down and burst into tears, otherwise I should have set up shrill cat-calls and war whoops which might have brought in the police. After a while I began to laugh, and at this moment Lionel entered the room in riding costume.

He was evidently pleased at my seeming

## G W E N D A

good spirits. Nice men are always pleased when their women folk are happy, and he asked me what I was going to do. Everybody in Town asks you as soon as they meet you what you are going to do, because they never stop "doing things," and if you replied you were going into Kensington Gardens to sit in the sun and read Browning, they would cry, "Oh, you are one of those dear eccentric people who do such delightfully odd things. You *are* delicious and amusing." They never dream of sitting down excepting at meals till they begin their "rest cure."

"What am I going to do?" I replied, surreptitiously wiping away my tears. It would never do to tell him I had nothing "on," because it would distress him, and spoil his ride. So I replied I was going shopping and had heaps of things to get through, which was true in a sense because I intended studying cookery books. And he was quite satisfied and kissed me, and said he was making arrangements for my taking riding lessons and then we would have some good times together in the Park.

Some good times together! My spirits rose with a bound, the very thought of cantering

## G W E N D A

along on a fine horse brought the blood with a rush to my cheeks.

"How lovely!" I sighed, "and do you think I shall soon learn?"

"Of course you will. You are cut out for a horsewoman. Look at the figure you've got. You'll look fine on a good mount," he replied.

"And sometimes we'll ride in the country, Lionel?"

"Well, we might, only I prefer the Park. You meet all your friends there, and—you'll be worth looking at."

For a moment I turned to the window to hide my face. Was I pleased with his pretty compliment? Honestly, no. A thousand times should I have preferred his saying he would enjoy long days in the country *alone* with me, dismounting for lunch at some wayside inn, again for tea, and home in the evening through cool, sweet-scented leafy lanes. Just the two of us with intimate talks and still more intimate silences. No people, no crowds. Involuntarily I turned and asked: "You still love me, Lionel?" And then at his look of surprise, a smile came to my lips. "You see I am like Wendy in 'Peter Pan.' I like to be told I am loved, why—quite once a day. We

## G W E N D A

women are built that way. Perhaps it is foolish of us."

"I think it is," he returned, "because you see we men marry you. What more can you want?"

I pictured your face, Granty, as he said this. Men are so ingenuous, and I think that is why we love them so. They are so much simpler and more honest than we. We rarely say what we think and men so rarely think what they say, or they wouldn't hurt us so often. And he looked so in earnest and so handsome that I could only laugh.

"And you think when a man has married a woman he always goes on loving her?" I queried.

"I don't say that," he replied, smoothing his well-brushed hair in front of a mirror, "it depends on the woman."

"And never on the man?"

"Not so much. A man always goes on pretty much the way he starts, but a woman frequently goes all to pieces. Gets bad tempered, and jealous and loses her looks. I don't think you'll become bad tempered, you are too sensible."

"But I may lose my looks?"

"Not just yet," he answered me gravely.



## G W E N D A

"You're the kind that wears well. Good complexion and hair and all that sort of thing. And now I must be off. I shall be in to lunch. Hurlingham this afternoon remember. Good bye, dear," and he went away humming a tune.

"I wonder if I ever shall get bad tempered," I mused later as I drove through the crowded streets, and then, as though in direct answer to my question, I found myself slapping Shandy who was unusually cross.

I must stop all this chit-chat. Does it bore you? But it's your own fault if it does. You encouraged me to let myself "go," and all the time I am hoping it may interest you. Fanchette says it is time I allowed myself to be dressed. Lionel had sent me in some Dorothy Perkins roses. Now for the fray. Wish me good luck.

June 20th.—The dinner was a great success. I wore a new frock and have joined the caterpillar brigade. Lionel says it looked moulded to my figure. He meant it as a compliment, but I am not sure I wanted it to look like that. However, if he is pleased! He also complimented me on the menu.

"Cook chose it all," I said bluntly.

## G W E N D A

"How was that?" he asked.

"I could think of nothing but boiled mutton and blackberry tart."

"Surely you meant saddle of mutton?"

"I meant boiled neck of mutton and caper sauce," I repeated obstinately.

He raised his eyebrows, and instantly I was sorry for my crossness.

"Look here, Lionel," I said gently. "You married me from a simple home. We had a three course dinner every day of our lives at 1 o'clock. Granty never gave a dinner party. But I am not stupid, only ignorant. There is a great difference between the two. I have bought two cookery books, and one contains 100 *recherché* dinners. I promise you within a week I will make cook 'sit up.' And at the next dinner we give my menu will be worthy of an ancient Phoenician feast."

Lionel said he didn't know what I meant, and I told him that though I shouldn't be able to obtain peacocks' eyes and humming-birds' tongues, I would present unto him other, and equally rare, delicacies if he would have faith in me.

But I was going to tell you about our guests and have wandered off to these devious by-

## G W E N D A

paths. Some of them were pleasant, most of them dull, and one or two amusing.

The guests of the evening were a Mr. and Mrs. Prendergast. I think Mrs. Prendergast is one of the most attractive women I have ever met. Not exactly pretty, but nice looking, amusing, vivacious, and possessing that indefinable quality—charm. Her voice, too, is charming, aloof yet tender, bantering yet earnest, and low in tone, which to me is such an attraction in women, who mostly seem to shout.

I couldn't remove my eyes from her at first, and twice said "No" to Mr. Prendergast when I ought to have said "Yes," and he only forgave me when he found that his wife was the object of my interest.

"She is quite as nice as she looks," he said frankly, his own rather hard business face softening. "A stunning woman and—" he drew himself up sharply as though fearing his confidence might be misplaced.

"Go on," I said. "I'm awfully interested. I like her looks so much that I hope we shall be friends."

"Of course you will," he said heartily. "We've known Lionel since he was a boy, or I should say *I* have."

## G W E N D A

"Have you?" I endeavoured to keep the interest out of my voice. "Now I really don't know which I want to hear about most—your wife, or my husband when he was in knickerbockers."

"Your husband, of course," he said with a smile, "but really I don't know that I remember anything very exciting about him. Let me see—yes, he had measles when he was about twelve, I recollect that."

"Most children have."

"Now, don't be ironic and interrupt my train of thought." His pleasant laughter sounded through the room. "I expect he had measles in a most masterly way, because Lionel is pretty thorough in whatever he does. He and I were at Eton together, and, you'll forgive my mentioning it, but he bullied me a bit, he was always big and I was small."

"No?" I said.

"But he did, and most women like a bully in a mild way. I don't say his bullying arose from anything but an excess of muscular energy and overflowing vitality, but there it was. Have you ever noticed the extraordinary strength of his fingers Mrs. Conyngham? He has a grip like a vice."

## G W E N D A

"I don't know that I have," I returned, and for some unaccountable reason I now wished he would leave Lionel and talk of his wife.

"Cambridge found us together again, Trinity College. He worked hard in spite of being a rich man. He never went in much for athletics, all his spare time was devoted to reading books that made your hair stand on end. You know the sort: Poe, Gaboriau. He read *The Murder of the Rue Morgue* aloud to me, I recollect, and I never saw or heard anything more realistically done. He mouthed like a baboon, and imitated the shrieks of the women till I was all of a blue funk and cold shivers running up and down my spine. I always thought he would be an actor, never dreamt for one moment that he would develop into a thorough society man, and a devoted husband into the bargain." He turned and smiled at me as he finished, "Have you had enough?"

"Thank you, quite," I replied, and it struck me that my voice sounded odd. "Tell me something of your wife now." And I was relieved when he launched forth, and in simple language told me where he had met her, and what he thought of her, and what all his friends said of her; and then I gradually drew him on to

## G W E N D A

talk of my guests, and while he talked I looked down the length of the table at my husband. What had Mr. Prendergast said—that he had been a bully? But that was nothing. All boys, healthy boys, were bullies. And Lionel was of a masterful temperament, a strong man in every sense of the word. Searchingly I stared at him, and suddenly he raised his head, and his eyes met mine and for a moment I held them. Then he smiled, a friendly nice smile, and, as in a flash, all was well with me. What had I been worrying about? What an idiot I was. Granty, I don't think London suits me. I am getting imaginative.

Now, I brought back my wandering attention to Mr. Prendergast. He was rallying me for not listening to him.

“But I was,” I fibbed.

“You were smiling at your husband.”

“And you have twice smiled at your wife,” I retorted.

He admitted the impeachment, and said if I would listen he would tell me about the woman who sat on my husband's left. She was one of the best bridge players in Town, and was equally good at golf. If I would notice, everything on the table was a potential game to her:

## G W E N D A

She formed balls out of bread pellets, spoons and forks became hazards, and salt cellars made good pot bunkers. Well dressed, well preserved, she was always in a rush, a perfect rag, but never looked it. Everybody liked her and she in return liked everybody but her own husband who *would* "have hobbies." That was the way *she* put it. His hobby at the moment was earthworms—"nasty slimy things." Following Darwin's precedent, he cemented the floor of a square of ground, placed cemented walls around it, filled it in with soil, turned some worms into this, and then enjoyed his investigations. Mr. Prendergast wasn't quite sure how frequently the entire earth, with the exception of deserts, passed through the bodies of worms, but Mr. Oules, he was sure, would inform us.

"Don't," I commanded laughing, "I don't want to know. He looks a bore."

The stout man next to Mrs. Oules was brimming over with ancient stories. Most of them were about eggs. There was the curate's egg, and the lady who sat next to a bishop, dropping an egg under the table, and being told by him to cackle. To-night he had a new one of a tired cock, who, leaning against a barn door

## G W E N D A

sighed "What a weary world. It's eggs to-day, and feather brushes to-morrow," and he laughed himself so much over his story that the man with a hobby, who knew him well, requested him to hush, quite crossly.

The lady of dignified mien, with pale watery eyes and Roman nose was the aunt of a bishop, and was famous for having crossed a desert on a camel with one attendant, "And looks as though the dust had got into her eyes," said Mr. Prendergast thoughtfully.

The fair-haired boyish-looking man was quite a famous K.C., and had taken silk at a younger age than any other man at the Bar. The pretty girl opposite to him was his daughter, noted for nothing but her good dancing. And the thin bronzed man at our end of the table was a rice merchant from Rangoon who came home for six months every second year to get up sufficient strength to go back. A man with a far-away look, a kind smile, and no appetite.

And now that Mr. Prendergast's recital had brought him up to the guests in our proximity, he had to lower his voice. The beaming man to my left who said "Eh, what?" was a father first, as anyone could see, and a ratepayer next. "And the lady to *my* left I know little about at



## G W E N D A

present, though I hope to know more, but I *can* say she is a good listener," he concluded laughing. And *you* always said, Granty, that I could only talk. It isn't that I want to be silent now, but all these people are strange to me, and theirs is a jargon I cannot understand, and half of it is slang I never heard before. I am not superior. Don't think it's that. But I am ignorant, and I'm afraid a little provincial.

Ever yours,

GWENDA.

## LETTER V

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, June 23rd.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

The longest day has come and gone, and I persuaded—or sweedled, as the people say here—Lionel to motor me down into the country, for the longest day in the country, when the weather is fine, is a thing not to be missed.

And the weather was fine at first, not too hot nor too cold, with a delicious little westerly breeze; and we spun along the smooth red roads to Shere. Red sandstone roads are so much prettier than chalk or lime. And there had been rain the night before, just enough to wash the hedges and trees and flowers, reviving their delicate beauty, and making them smell sweet and fresh. Is there anything lovelier than an English lane with rain-washed banks, and peeps over the hedges and gates of blue distances—hills and downs and valleys? It is our atmosphere that lends such delicate mystical loveliness to the landscape, and at-

## G W E N D A

mosphere is the outcome of rain. Where there is no rain there is no atmosphere, only garish crude colours. I mentioned this to Lionel, and he remarked that the way I hit upon and "discovered" well-known facts was delightful. And I was in no mood to take offence. Half the delight of life, I think, is in finding out things for yourself, don't you?

When I'm an old, old lady I shall live at Shere if I don't live at Silvercombe, because when you're old it is good for your soul that there should be no distraction beyond the pleasure of a little river babbling right through the midst of your village, a little river laughing and singing in the sunshine. And when you are old and the sap drying up in your bones, the pine trees, with the sound of the wind in their branches, and the great stretches of heather country are good for your body, because do not pines and heather mean invigorating tonic air? And I shall live in a lovely old-world cottage, and jasmine and roses will peep in at the windows. Balbriggan will not be there, neither will Mrs. Perkins, the cook. And Lionel will do a bit of gardening, just a little raking perhaps, because he will also be old, and raking requires so little strength. There may be

## G W E N D A

daughters and sons too, but that is in the hands of the gods.

I voiced my musings as we sat in the pretty garden of the old fashioned inn at which we had lunched. Stirring my coffee and sniffing at a big crimson rose which dangled above my head I said "Won't it be nice, Lionel? I with a lavender bow in my cap, and you in a holland coat gardening?"

And he said he hated gardening above all things, that he should never bury himself in the country. That the older you got the more you wanted people and noise and towns. Silence brought retrospection and introspection, the two worst maladies from which any human being could suffer, and the antidote to which was a blue pill and a night at a music hall. Then he startled me by suddenly seizing me and framing my face in his hands and crying: "But you'll never grow old. I hate to think of it, to contemplate it even. I don't like old women. They mouth their words and are feeble and ugly. You must always remain young, always be my beautiful Gwenda. The very thought of old age and death and corruption on a day like this are nauseating. Don't talk of it. Don't speak of it."

## G W E N D A

Releasing me he walked up and down the garden with long angry strides, flicking at the weeds with his stick, and muttering to himself. And I sat mute with surprise staring at him.

Presently he paused in front of me. "Don't you see that I love your body? How I gloried in watching you bathe at Cancale. Your flesh is so firm and white. You were like a mermaid glancing through the water. I can't bear to think of that body feeble and shrivelled. Can't you understand that it hurts me physically?"

"But don't you love my soul a little bit too?" I cried, "Oh, my husband, a woman always loves to be loved for her soul best of all. And that never grows old to the man she loves and who loves her. I have a soul tucked away somewhere if you only knew it, and I am ready to take it out, poor thing that it is, and show it to you if you will. In all the mad whirl of gaiety, in the endless succession of dinners and theatres and bridge, it is becoming dwarfed and stifled, longing for a wider atmosphere and for a congenial spirit with which to dally. Won't you be that spirit?" Smilingly, I placed my hands on his shoulders, "You with your rake, I with my lavender bow. A few months back, when we stood on the cliffs at Silvercombe, it

## G W E N D A

was April and a lark was soaring and singing in the blue, and again at Cancale when we watched the sun set over the sea, it seemed to me that our souls just frayed the edge of each other's garments, and I was infinitely happy. For a soul, after all, when you come to think of it, is often very lonely. Who ever enters into our secret places, knows us as we really are? We come into being alone, we pass into the shadows alone; and if during our short pilgrimage on earth we get into touch, if only for a little while with another spirit that is lonely, why we are each the happier."

My hands slipped to my side, for Lionel's eyes were averted, and his forehead puckered with perplexity. He didn't understand what I was driving at, he said, and he was sure no man would unless he were a clairvoyant who was thoroughly up in spirits and spooks and all that kind of bosh. "You used not to be mystical and emotional," he said reproachfully.

"And I am not now," I protested. "Is it mystical and emotional, to desire a companion for your mind as well as for your body?"

"And you used to be such a jolly sort of girl, with a laugh that made other people laugh," he continued ignoring my interruption.

## G W E N D A

"There doesn't seem to be so much to laugh at now." The words were out before I realised what I was saying, and instantly sorry I took them back.

"I don't like this sort of talk. As soon as a woman becomes analytical she goes all to pot." He struck at a tall lupin. "I am sure you have got everything a girl could possibly want, and you hadn't very much down at Silvercombe. I have spent the last six months in trying to think of the things that would give you pleasure. I had the paper in your boudoir specially made, and you never sit in the room. The same with your necklace, you never wear it because you don't like showy things. I went to Brittany to please you, though it was the dullest hole I ever struck. And I never stop considering what you would like to do next, and then you go and talk like this."

Full of contrition for having hurt him, and grieved that he should so misunderstand me, I again put my arms around his neck. "I know," I said, "and I'm sorry if you think I am not grateful. I *do* appreciate all that you have given me, very very much. I only meant . . . but I can't explain, it is difficult. The intimate homely things of life, the things that cost little

## G W E N D A

or nothing, yet are priceless, come to me first, mean the most to me. Books, poetry, sunlight on wide meadows, wind in a field of rye, a crackling log fire on a wild winter's night, stories of heroism and sacrifice, the laughter of little children, the love of one human being for another, all come to me before anything money can buy. I am not emotional or sentimental, but Granty and I have learned to love all these things—perhaps because we had nothing else to love—and this new life is a little strange, and I am just the least bit lonely, because there are so many people . . .” Again, I laughed. “You won’t understand this because you are used to them. I am not lonely when I am amongst the pine trees at home. I recognise all that they and the wind may be whispering, but *you* would be lonely. You are accustomed to being surrounded by your fellow creatures. You enjoy their society, their friendship; and I am going to learn to enjoy what you enjoy. Why, my husband, I have an enormous fund of happiness and good spirits to draw upon. Never again think I am not contented and happy because—” In a flash, I realised that I was going to tell a lie, but I went straight on. It was one of the necessary lies of this life, for



## G W E N D A

Lionel was still frowning and perplexed—"I *am* happy and contented. And *now* kiss and be friends. And don't you think we ought to be going, for a cloud certainly no bigger than a man's hand has appeared in the west, and the wind is coming from there. Though I may not be accomplished, I know more about the weather than most girls. Come."

And the cloud gathered to an ominous size before we had got many miles on our homeward journey, and the wind rose, and soon we were in the teeth of a storm; and before Lionel could get the cover up we were almost drenched to the skin, and my hat was almost blown from my head and long strands of my hair escaped and lashed me across the face, but somehow I enjoyed it with a wild sort of exhilaration. We were at the mercy of the elements. The trees bowed down before the fury of the gale, little flowers laid their velvety faces to the wet earth, the big drops stung our faces.

"Leave the cover up," I shouted. "It is glorious."

For a moment Lionel regarded me as one regards a person who is deranged, and then raised the cover with a snap. And I only laughed and hugged his arm.

## G W E N D A

June 30th.—A good deal I have written just lately, I am doubtful about sending you, Granty. Firstly because it has been about Lionel and myself, intimate talk. I have always told you everything, and it has been a relief to me to write, just as you predicted. Why should the mere fact of inscribing your sensations in black and white bring you relief? Have you ever noticed though that this is a fact? You sit down to describe the death of a much loved friend. The writing paper, pen and ink have been approached with diffidence and halting steps. Your sorrow is so great that you cannot bear to speak of it. But within five minutes you are so touched and wrung by the beauty of your own language, that your tears are flowing easily and almost happily, and you are even deriving a certain amount of satisfaction from your own pain. But I fancy you have said all this yourself. How often you must be amused at my echoing your sentiments!

Certainly a trouble and misunderstanding lose half their sting if faced practically and with an earnest desire to remove the cause of the misunderstanding.

The other day I imagined my soul was lonely. I began to pity myself. I was hurt because

## G W E N D A

Lionel didn't exhibit a keen desire to sit and hold my hand half the day. I resented the presence of so many people. I was ashamed of my ignorance. My pride was always up in arms. I was unhappy and longed to be back in Silvercombe. Then came your wise practical letter. Had you sensed the trouble? Suddenly I saw that if I had a soul at all, it was a poor sort of thing and nothing to boast about. Then came the sickening realisation that I was selfish and unreasonable. I knew when I married Lionel that he was rich and had many friends. I said I was prepared to dance to his piping, and the minute he calls upon me to do so, I begin to howl. I want slapping. I have made up my mind from this moment to enjoy my life. There is no reason why I shouldn't. I have everything money can buy. Surely this ought to satisfy any girl. But, oh, Granty, I wish you were just round the corner. I do so want you.

Lovingly,

GWENDA.

## LETTER VI

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, S. W.;  
July 4th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I don't think I *can* keep Fanchette. Her respect increased for me 100 per cent on the day that she discovered I had ordered twelve new dresses and one bang go, and all of the newest materials and up-to-date designs, but she never lets me alone about my hair. She condescends to approve of the colour, but the way I dress it is *démodé* and dowdy. She wants me to wear pin curls on my temples that have grown on another woman's. "Ducks" she calls them, "so sweet and so inexpensive—only 7/6 each." Then she wishes to fasten Empire bunches of curls at the back of my head. My own hair is too long to roll into satisfactory curls, and the bought ones are so chic and will fill up the hiatus under my hats!

"But I have no hiatus," I objected. And she said I would have if only I would wear fashionable hats. And I replied it was no good dis-

## G W E N D A

cussing what I *would* have, if I hadn't got it. And I didn't see the fun of achieving a gap beneath my hats just to fill it up again with Empire curls. And she sighed and called upon Heaven to witness she was doing her best.

So if you know of a girl in the village who would do as a maid, let me know. The more ignorant she is the better I shall like her, for I may then be allowed to have my own way occasionally. And if her name should be Martha, so much the better. I keep getting Fanchette mixed up with Planchette, and then she's offended. Martha only rhymes with Arthur, and I shouldn't be likely to call her that, however wandering I might be. I remember there was a Martha at Silvercombe with blue eyes and smooth brown hair, daughter of a fisherman. Fanchette has snappy black eyes, and her hair is a veritable tower of curls and twists.

Cook, or Mrs. Perkins as I find she likes to be called, has been relegated to her proper position. The fear of me lies in her heart, if the love of me doesn't. It took a week to achieve this, a week of hard work studying cookery books and 200 *recherché* dinners.

At first she took high ground with me, then became soothing as one dealing with a refrac-

## G W E N D A

tory child, and finally took up the position that things were out of season. With calm effrontery she endeavoured to make me believe that I couldn't get salmon trout at the end of June for love or money. But I was very patient and very firm. The dishes I had selected before leaving my room that morning, those dishes of a certainty we dined of at night. Had I not thought out the soups and fish whilst taking my bath; the entrée and entremet over my hair, the savoury, I am ashamed to say, during my prayers? Were they to be put aside after all my travail and weariness of spirit by a woman named Perkins?

"Did you say roly-poly pudding, Madame?" she demanded in such pained amazement the other morning that I had to bite my tongue so severely to keep from laughing that it really hurt.

I nodded. "I believe the master would like it, though he never gets it. And if we write it *rolé polé*, it will sound French and taste English."

"And dolmans in vine leaves? I think I know everything there is to be known about cookery, but a dolman in a vine leaf——"

"You haven't met dolmans in vine leaves?"

## G W E N D A

I cried in such well-simulated astonishment that Mrs. Perkins instantly recollected she had. Mrs. Perkins can lie as well as most servants, and she is resourceful above all things.

We had dolmans that night, Granty, and they were the most disagreeable things I had ever met. A sort of pulpy beef olive rolled up in a vine leaf which was burnt, and a sash round its middle. Lionel remarked that Mrs. Perkins was going off in her cooking and I felt very unhappy. Still it must have been a poser to find vine leaves all in a minute, and I cheered up a little. Next morning I enquired carelessly how she had obtained them, and her reply sent me into something very like a temper though I kept it under control! "Oh, Madame, the leaf part seemed immaterial to me so long as the inside was right, so I just used large currant leaves, I thought you wouldn't be able to detect the difference." And I hadn't.

Now I am spending every minute I can snatch in trying to think of a dish Mrs. Perkins *doesn't* know, and cannot get beyond stewed lampreys. And I am not sure if you can get them in this country, or whether the king who died from overeating them had had them imported.

## G W E N D A

It took me a week to drive it home to Balbriggan that in future I intended to think out my own table decorations. *He* could do the arranging of the flowers and *I* do the planning. When I said forget-me-nots and gypsophila he appeared not to have heard me, and as from some self-effacing wraith the word "orchids" was breathed, "I didn't say orchids," I observed pleasantly. "I think you are a little deaf, Balbriggan, I said forget-me-nots and gypsophila. See, I will write it down and then you won't forget." Gradually I am winning through. It is exhausting this hot weather, but it must be done.

July 4th.—I have been thinking of what you said to me two or three days before my wedding: "You will probably be hurt with your husband during the first week of your married life, and angry with him the second—most wives are. The third week you will quarrel, as you are of a sensitive disposition, and the fourth have a regular row. Then the air will be cleared, and, if you are as sensible as I imagine you to be, you will settle down to make the best of things, and of him. He is probably doing *his* best. It may be a bad best from the



## G W E N D A

standpoint of a newly married woman, but it might be worse. There is no end to what a man *can* do if he likes. So if you just succeed in keeping him quiet and amused and pleased with himself and in a good temper, you are doing a lot. But one thing remember, never lose your own temper. It's bad enough for a man to lose his, but foolish for a woman. It at once puts her at a disadvantage. The moment she lets fly, the man has sufficient, or thinks he has sufficient cause to bang a door and go and get drunk somewhere. If he's going to get drunk, let him get drunk in his own home. Don't, through the sharpness of your tongue, give him the chance of saying he's been driven out of his own house. A man will say that on the slightest provocation. Moral, never lose your temper."

And I have lost mine pretty badly, and all about nothing, so to speak, which, as you say, has put me at such a disadvantage that I have wanted to creep into a nice tight hole like a lobworm and entirely disappear from view. And Lionel and I are, well, not exactly, out of friends, as little children say, but there is just a suspicion of restraint and aloofness between us which makes me feel lonesome and sad.

## G W E N D A

I was in the boudoir this morning, where Lionel likes me to sit after breakfast, when he came into the room. He usually attends to his correspondence in the library at this hour, so I was surprised and very glad to see him. The boudoir always depresses me, and I sit trying to like it each morning without much success. His appearance brightened up things wonderfully, and I made a cheerful remark about the beauty of the morning, which seeing it was raining hard at the moment, was a little out of place.

He stood in front of the mantel-shelf and picking up a *Cloisonné* vase examined it with absent eyes. I knew that he wanted to say something to me which he found perhaps a little difficult, and wondering what it could be I waited for him to speak.

At last it came, and I admit I was disappointed at its lack of interest: "What are you wearing to-night at Lady Rivers'?"

"Heavens!" I thought, "is he going to begin, too? Surely Fanchette is enough." I must tell you I don't yet know this Lady Rivers. She called upon me and I was out. I returned her call and she was out. Evidently she held a position of some importance in Lionel's eyes, and a spirit of mischief entered into me.

## G W E N D A

"I had thought of either the green-spangled net or my wedding dress — whichever you prefer," I said gravely.

He made a little movement of impatience. "Have you nothing smarter than either of those things? Lady Rivers is so—" he paused.

"Yes?"

"So beautifully dressed, and I expect she's critical. She looks it. And there are sure to be some smart women there to-night with eyes sharp enough to recognise that your gown was made by some provincial dressmaker."

"And if they did?" I queried.

He raised his brows. "You are married to a rich man. You can afford to go to a first-class dressmaker. You can afford to be as well-dressed as any woman."

"But I must wear out my trousseau frocks, they can't be wasted. My green-spangled net must have cost five pounds if it cost a penny, and my wedding dress was frightfully expensive, the bugle trimming alone was five and sixpence a yard." I hid the laughter in my voice, for he was so very much in earnest, and he looked such a splendid figure of a man as he leant against the mantel-shelf.

He picked up the *Cloisonné* vase and banged

## G W E N D A

it down with some violence and I was glad that it was of a strong make. "Give them away, every one of your clothes. They're all dowdy, give them to Fanchette."

I think, perhaps, he saw I was hurt, for he spoke more gently. "You hadn't much chance of picking up anything decent at Exeter, I suppose, but now you have, so get yourself an entire new outfit, and spare no expense. There's a Clotilde who hangs out in some back street somewhere or other, and worth her weight in gold."

"How do you know about her?" I asked quietly.

"Oh—er——"

"Don't," I cried suddenly, "I don't want to know. I was only teasing you. Some of your smart friends will have told you. They keep nothing to themselves. I heard a woman tell a man the other day that she wore three lots of suspenders to keep her figure down. She laughed immoderately, and apparently thought the information interesting and amusing, whether he thought the same, or simply vulgar, I don't know. I have already discovered Clotilde. She's a wonderful person, and I had given her an order for a dozen new gowns—

## G W E N D A

morning, visiting, and evening before I knew what I was doing. I had begun to realise that you were not pleased with my appearance. I had seen you glance askance at my toilets. It hurt me a bit at first. Now I don't mind. I can see you were paying me a high compliment in wishing me to look as well as other women. Now I hope you will be satisfied for some of the frocks are of exquisite make and material. I knew you would not grouse at the bills, if the result were good; so I just put myself unreservedly into Clotilde's clever hands. Are you pleased, my husband, for I have worked hard?"

"I will tell you when I see you in them," and I smiled at his caution, it was so exactly like him.

"You didn't seem dissatisfied with my appearance when we were engaged," I ventured, trying to keep my voice practical.

"Ah, you were unmarried then, and simplicity was in keeping with your setting. Plain gowns and wide-brimmed straw hats were in harmony with cliffs and rocks and wild moors. Paris clothes would have been bizarre. You knew it, and your pose was clever."

"My pose!" My cheeks reddened with anger. Then I laughed. Surely he was teasing

## G W E N D A

me. "Do you really think I am that sort?" I asked, with my hand on his arm.

"Women can't help it. You are freer from it than most. But I think women are unattractive if they are perfectly natural. The elemental woman has always bored me. Your simplicity attracted me, your unworldliness, but beneath it all I knew there was a substratum of coquetry. You would have been dull without."

"Good heavens!" I cried. "I wonder what I shall hear next. Will you think I am telling you an untruth if I say I have never posed in my life."

"You think you haven't, and I quite believe you. But I know you better, my Gwenda." And he laughed as again the colour burnt in my cheeks. "And why should you mind? We all pose. Your fear of people, your air of shyness, the look of wistfulness in your wide gray eyes, are all a pose, and a very pretty one too. They caused me to fall in love with you; but now, as a married woman, they are not so becoming, and I should let them drop." He tried to put an arm round me, but I wrested myself away from him.

"Don't touch me," I panted, stamping my

## G W E N D A

foot. "You shall not touch me if you feel like that about me. Oh—" and I dashed out of the room fearful of what I should say next.

And could he have meant it, do you think? He couldn't. You and I always hated people so much who posed, we laughed at them so. We felt so scornful toward them. I remember your saying once that all people who posed were bores, and they only became interesting when they were natural. So I am a bore. Oh, Granty, what a lot of disagreeable things I am finding out about myself. I am a dowdy bore, and I have also lost my temper. But married life is a little more difficult than it sounded when Lionel talked about it! Quite a good bit more difficult.

July 7th.—And we went to Lady Rivers' dinner party, and it is the last time I shall ever enter her house. She is certainly the most beautiful woman I have seen since I came to London, and also the most dangerous. There was something about her which filled me with the most curious distrust and fear, and I felt if I were a man wanting to run straight I should be really frightened of her. She moved about among her guests, easily, charmingly, a smiling

## G W E N D A

gracious hostess, exquisite from the top of her perfectly coiffured head to the point of her silver slipper. I suppose, too, she was perfectly dressed, but there was so little of it. Directoire and Princess frocks are such wisps, that I found myself growing hot as she walked about the room and had much ado to keep myself from shouting: "Madame, you have forgotten your petticoats."

A bored elderly young stockbroker—why did I imagine he was a stockbroker—crooked his elbow and led me in to dinner. Oh, how very old was that poor young man and how very weary. I thought he would fall asleep into his soup. He picked up a little when he discovered that I was married. Hadn't caught my name . . . didn't look married . . . single women frightened him so dreadfully . . . only felt safe with married ones . . . and their talk so much more interesting . . . (a droop of the tired eyelids). Perhaps I would be kind to him.

"Poor thing," I said sympathetically; and then he woke up and tried to be fascinating. The vacuousness of his conversation was worse than his sleepiness. I should have loved to have slapped a mustard leaf suddenly onto his spine, and awaited results. Tiring of him I



## G W E N D A

turned my attention to the rest of the assembled company and mine hostess. The table was round, covers for sixteen only, and I could hear every word of the conversation distinctly. I am not a prude. Why do I preface what I am going to say with that? Am I afraid of the opinion of such people as these? Am I afraid of being dubbed superior, priggish, provincial? But I know you will not think this of me. Grantly, the conversation of these men and women left me amazed. At first I could hardly credit that I heard aright. Stories of well-known people, dancers, actresses, public servants, even Cabinet Ministers could not escape. Characters torn to shreds, reputations left with not a leg to stand upon. Plays, books discussed that should have been undiscussable. A public censor should have been at the elbow of each man and woman, and more especially the woman. All touched upon in a light pseudo modest fashion, with shrugs of apologetic white shoulders, eyelids modestly cast down, and an air of: "I am not responsible for this bit of scandal. You must take it for what it is worth."

I looked at Lionel. What did he mean by bringing me to such a house and making me associate with such people? He couldn't have

## G W E N D A

known, couldn't have had an idea, or he would not have subjected me to such an indignity. I held him with my eyes, seeking and asking for sympathy, but he was engrossed with Lady Rivers and didn't look my way. He seemed perfectly contented and at home, and was so absorbed that possibly the conversation around him had escaped his attention.

Presently I made a show of talking to my companion, and he remarked in a plaintive voice that I might have been to a funeral.

"Perhaps, I have," I returned smiling, "the funeral of my lost ideals."

"Difficult burying?"

"Very difficult, because I would fain have kept them with me. Perhaps you have noticed that when your ideals, your illusions go you begin to feel old," I said.

"Never had any. Rotten things to have. You're bound to lose them, then down you come to earth with a bang like a man who's lost control of his aeroplane. Never keen on hurting myself. Very practical chap."

"But if you never have any illusions you miss a great deal of the beauty of life, and the sadness of the world hurts you badly."

"I don't know what you mean," he said

## G W E N D A

thoughtfully, "and I'm rather tired. I only like talking about common or garden things when I'm dining out, nothing that requires any effort of thought. Most women are too clever for me—I mean married women, and girls want to flirt."

"*Do they?*"

"You needn't be quite so astonished," he said, leaning back in his seat and closing his eyes. "Some people like me."

"Of course, I don't know you very well, but I am sure it is possible," I rejoined.

He looked at me with languid eyes. "I can't think why you are so unkind to me. I have done nothing to you."

"I am sorry if I have been horrid, but I feel horrid."

"I haven't minded," he assured me. "I mind very few things. Ah," he roused himself with a show of interest, "Lady Rivers is going to tell a story. She usually reserves a clinker till the end of dinner." He leaned forward quite eagerly. I would repeat that story but I don't think you would see the point of it, I didn't, and Lionel explained it to me afterward at my request. I wanted to understand why the others had laughed so immoderately. Her voice

G W E N D A

was sweet and her language well chosen, she might have been talking to a Sunday school class.

"And do people—people of that class, I mean—enjoy such stories?" I demanded vehemently, as we drove home.

"I don't know what you mean by 'people of that class,'" Lionel replied coldly.

"Common, vulgar, evil-minded people," I cried, losing control of myself.

For a moment I could hear him breathe a little hard. He was leaning far back in the carriage and I could not see his face.

"I should like you to take that back," he said at length very quietly, "your language is strong."

"Never."

"They are my friends."

"Your *friends!*" I repeated incredulously.

"Certainly."

"Then I am sorry for your *taste.*" Granty, I shouldn't have said that. I knew he was angry, and I shouldn't have fanned the flame. But I too was angry.

"They will also be your friends. Your opinion of my taste we will leave out of the question."

## G W E N D A

"They will never be my acquaintances let alone my friends." My voice was steady, but I shook from head to foot.

"You will send out invitations to a dinner next week, and Lady Rivers must be the principal guest," he said quietly.

"Lionel, you cannot mean it?"

"But I do."

I leant back trying to read his face, and slipped my hand into his, there was something in his voice that had chilled me, but he made no response. "You cannot mean me to know that woman," I whispered.

"I do most decidedly. I think it would be a privilege. I have not known Lady Rivers long or intimately, but I think she is one of the most beautiful and attractive women in London. Why you dub her 'that woman' beats my comprehension."

"And you approve of her? Think her refined, and enjoy her stories?"

"What I know of her I distinctly approve. I think her quite good enough for my wife to know. And as for her stories, pah! Only a bread and butter miss straight from the school-room could possibly look down her nose at them."

## G W E N D A

"That last story amusing?"

"Certainly, and scarcely risqué. You are a little prude, my dear, and prudes have always excessively annoyed me. They are not only self-satisfied, but boring. What is the matter with you, Gwenda? You have very much changed. What has become of my bright jolly charming girl? You used to be so sensible. Now you are always puling." He slipped his arm round me.

"I have not changed," I said slowly, battling to keep the tears back, for his words had hurt. "I have not changed, only you didn't know me before. Our courtship was too short, and I am sorry, sorry for us both."

"You needn't be sorry for me. I am quite satisfied when you behave sensibly. And you looked A1 to-night. I was quite proud of you. That simple style of dressing your hair suits you though it isn't fashionable. If you regret that you married me, I'm afraid that I can't help it. I do everything a man can to make you happy, and if you're not, it's not my fault."

"I am happy. I mean I should be quite happy if——"

"If you had your own way about everything," he laughed.

## G W E N D A

"No, I don't mean that. I—I didn't know I was so selfish, Lionel," again my voice broke.

"You mean if I didn't insist upon your knowing people like Lady Rivers?"

I did not speak.

"Do you mean that?" He gave my arm a little shake.

"Perhaps."

"But it is foolish of you. You will have to know her."

"I shall never know her," I said quietly, as we arrived at our own door. And, without saying "good night" he walked up the stairs and locked himself in his dressing room.

Of course, I watered my pillow with tears. You predicted that I should—sooner or later. I remember the occasion upon which you said it. We were walking up the cliffs to the coast guard station. It was a clear fragrant evening in May. The gorse was golden on every side of us. You smiled because I said that like Linnæus of old I wanted to go down on my knees and thank God for its glory, its golden glory. I broke off some prickly bits and inhaled its subtle almond scent, so delicate and so sweet. It was then you said "Gwenda, you are very happy." And because I was caressed by a

## G W E N D A

warm soft wind, and wrapped around by the scents of the gorse and the sea and the stirring bracken, and because there was green new turf at my feet, and overhead the blue serene sky and a baby crescent moon, and you at my side and life before me with Lionel, I cried in my arrogance "I shall always be happy." And then you said in your wise way and with a little apology for your pessimism, "No woman is always happy if she be very human and very affectionate and very sensitive. It is impossible as long as any man comes into her life, whether it be a husband, or a son, or a brother. Men bring happiness to the women who love them, but also do they bring much sorrow, especially husbands. Few women within the first few months of their married life escape watering their pillows with their tears, while their husbands snore profoundly at their sides. In a couple of years the women snore equally profoundly. The first bloom of their sensitiveness has been rubbed off. They have got used to things. They have become a little harder, their romantic affection for the husband has become prosaic, but they are happier."

The prospect that a time will come when I, too, shall learn to snore profoundly comforts



## G W E N D A

me not a little, and let it come quickly,  
I cry.

Now when you next write I want you to tell me what a hypothetical friend of yours named Belinda Ann did when she was confronted with a similar difficulty to mine. Belinda Ann's husband insisted upon her receiving at her house a woman of whom she disapproved. Belinda Ann said she shouldn't; her husband said she must and should. Belinda Ann loved her husband and hated hurting him, she also hated and despised the woman. What did she do?

Write and tell me quickly,

Your perplexed,

GWENDA.

## LETTER VII

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON,  
July 14th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I think Belinda Ann acted most sensibly in always shelving a question till the necessity arose for tackling it. For, as you say, the Lady Rivers of the world might go to Honolulu, and fall sick of a fever, and die and be planted among the daisies. My Lady Rivers is remaining in Town till the end of the Season, I heard her say so, and she looks extraordinarily healthy; but one never knows, and one hopes for the best.

Your letter did me heaps of good. You are quite right. I did take the whole matter too seriously. There was nothing to water my pillow about. If Lionel had slapped me in the face as you suggest, or had got drunk, or had been making love to another woman, I might have felt I had sufficient cause to howl. I am a sensitive idiot, and will you think me mean if I say I don't think it is entirely my own fault?

## G W E N D A

Granty, you sheltered me too much at home. My life was made too easy for me from the time you befriended me as a tiny girl till the day I drove away in all my wedding finery, which Fanchette has now persuaded a second-hand clothes woman to remove from the premises. I started out in the world badly equipped to do battle with it. I had got into a groove, a beautiful, soft, rounded groove, but one that did not help me to face life gamely. When I was hurt you rubbed butter and placed pieces of raw meat on the bumps, when I was in pain you comforted me with poultices mentally as well as physically, when I cried you wiped away the tears. You should have let me cry occasionally till I was black in the face, and allowed me to suffer till I curled up like a wire-worm. As it is, I am formless and without any back bone; perhaps I should have been that in any case—back boneless, but you didn't give me a chance. Anything that I disliked doing, you did for me, if old Hannah was not about to see you giving in to me. Possibly you will say that you only gave in in unimportant matters, but they counted, they have told on my character.

Oh, what a beast you will think me. I am blaming you for my own lack of strength, put-

## G W E N D A

ting it on to your shoulders. Searching about like Adam and Eve for someone upon whom to lay the responsibility of my shortcomings. Forgive me. I have always liked the Serpent so much better than those two weaklings, and I am going to try to do so much better now, cease to be a weakling, and like Daniel dare to stand alone and without shouting out for somebody to prop me up.

July 15th.—I suddenly felt I would like to have a picnic this afternoon. The weather has been insufferably hot and we have rushed about to dinners and balls and theatres and race-meetings till I am beginning to feel very, very tired.

We had a huge luncheon party to-day, and when by half past three everybody had gone, and Lionel departed for his club, and I was left to my own resources, which is a very delightful and unique experience, this desire for a picnic suddenly came upon me. Tea out under cool spreading branches, near cool water, with cool grass beneath my feet. With no Balbriggan to announce that it was served, with no handsome furniture—gorgeous cabinets, inlaid tables and solemn grand piano sitting staring

## G W E N D A

at me—but just the furniture of the earth to bring peace to my soul and the sounds of nature to soothe my tired spirit.

Where should I go? I wanted to be unaccompanied. If I selected Richmond Park, two polite liveried servants would conduct me there by motor or carriage, it was too late to go by train. I searched around in my mind. Why, Kensington Gardens, close at hand, just at my elbow. Plenty of cool grass, trees, and the water would be supplied by the Serpentine. Why hadn't I thought of it before?

Balbriggan's face as I ordered the thermos and tea-basket to be prepared was sphinx-like as usual. "No," I said in reply to his question, I did not want the carriage, nor the electric brougham, nor the car, nor anything, nor anybody. Who then would carry my basket as I was taking tea out? Myself, of course. Nothing gave me greater pleasure than to carry a basket on a nice summer afternoon, so long as it wasn't a clothes or a fish basket:

"It makes me feel picnicky, and pleasant, and altogether light-hearted, Balbriggan," I said. "Indeed the mere fact of having a basket in my hand makes me want to run."

"Yes, Madame," he said imperturbably.

## G W E N D A

"Has it the same effect upon you?"

"No, Madame."

The very thought of my butler running made me want to laugh, and I checked it with difficulty.

"I shall be ready in ten minutes," I told him.

"Please put the things on the hall table."

"Yes, Madame."

I removed my luncheon party finery and got into a cotton frock and shady straw hat. I locked Fanchette out of the room for I guessed she would be troublesome, then I descended the stairs and found Balbriggan awaiting me with the basket. He looked a little troubled as he bowed me out of the front door, in fact, I could hardly persuade him to part with the basket. Couldn't Hillingbran carry it for me to whatever place I was going and then leave me?

"No," I said sternly, stepping into the road, and he quickly closed the door. Possibly he flew to a window, and other servants may have watched me from various points of vantage, but I cared not. I was alone, I was free, and it was a glorious summer afternoon.

When I reached the Serpentine I placed my basket beneath a tree near by, and then helped

## G W E N D A

two little boys to sail boats. It was very exciting, and by the time I had finished I was a little wet and exhausted, and felt I had earned my tea.

It is extraordinary the way in which Providence sometimes upsets one's simplest plans when one can see no apparent reason for doing so. There is no harm in drinking tea in a London Park, it is an innocent amusement. I felt amiable and at peace with all men, I harboured no unkind or evil thoughts, I was reading out some lines from Whittier—

“And if the husband or the wife  
In home's strong light discovers  
Such slight defaults as failed to meet  
The blinded eyes of lovers,

“Why need we care to ask?—who dreams  
Without their thorns of roses,  
Or wonders that the truest steel  
The readiest spark discloses?

“For still in mutual sufferance lies  
The secret of true living;  
Love scarce is love that never knows  
The sweetness of forgiving.”

My cup was suspended in the air, a piece of chocolate cake in my other hand, my book stretched open on my knee, when raising my

## G W E N D A

eyes I descried a tall gray figure through the trees that somehow seemed familiar, a tall upright figure of a man that was coming my way. My heart beat a little quickly. "It *cannot* be," I told myself. "It is impossible. He is at his club."

Nearer and nearer came the figure. I bent my eyes on my book. Whoever it was I might escape his notice. "Love scarce is love that never knows the sweetness of forgiving—" I read again and yet again, my head sinking lower and lower, till only the top of my hat could have been visible. The figure stopped right in front of me, but I did not look up—the crown of my hat I hoped was attractive. And then there came a voice—a voice full of credulous amazement; of sorrowful amazement and reproach: "What *are* you doing, Gwenda?"

And it struck me as being a stupid question, for, of course, it was so very obvious what I *was* doing.

"I—I am just having tea in Kensington Gardens," I explained patiently.

He stood and stared at me and my eyes dropped before his. "Will you have some?" I asked ingratiatingly. "There is plenty for



## G W E N D A

both. You can have the cup and I will drink from the saucer."

"Gwenda!"

His voice was so loud and startling that I nearly fell off the seat.

"Yes, Lionel?"

"How *can* you?"

"I am so fond of picnics. Are—aren't you?"

"Picnics in Kensington Gardens?" His horror began to tell on me.

"There is nowhere else handy."

"Come home at once. We might be seen at any moment. Pack up the things quickly," he said.

"Oh, can't I just finish?" I pleaded, "You could hold my parasol in front of me. I—I was so enjoying myself."

"*Enjoying* yourself. It was Providence who made me return to the house so soon, and Balbriggan at once told me you had gone out with the tea-basket. I could scarcely believe it."

"I think Providence interferes unnecessarily at times," I observed, "don't you?"

He did not reply, and with trembling fingers I packed up. Then I searched for some daisies and buttercups to put at the top of the basket. "If we meet any of your friends they will think

## G W E N D A

we have been collecting botanical specimens," I said.

Still he did not reply.

I stood in front of him feeling like a naughty little boy who has been caught paddling in the duck pond in his best velvet suit. "I am ready," I said meekly.

He offered to take the basket, but I would not give it to him. "No, I don't care about appearances," I said, and silently we walked home.

When we reached the door he said quite kindly: "Gwenda, I must request you never to do such a thing again. You are not a nursemaid. You are the mistress of a large establishment in Prince's Gate. I know it is difficult for you to realise your position, but you must try to do so for my sake. At the first opportunity I will take you down into the country for the day, and we will have a real picnic with ginger beer and pork pies for lunch."

"How glorious!" I cried. And afterward I realised I shouldn't have said that for his last words had been intended for sarcasm.

July 16th.—Lionel has just gone off to the Eclipse Stakes with two men friends. He has

## G W E N D A

been trying to arrange a day's entertainment for me in his absence, and as the thermometer registers 87° in the shade, I would listen to none of his suggestions. It is difficult to make him or any of his friends understand that a quiet day to some people is a real pleasure. That to rest and read and have nothing to do is a delight to one's soul. He first suggested a *matinée* with a friend. "In this heat," I cried. Then he dangled a concert at the Queen's Hall, a picture gallery, a motor show at Olympia, a cat show, a flower show, an aeroplane show before my tired eyes. Then he passed to a fancy fair at the Crystal Palace, and the White City, till I felt I was going to scream. Finally he banged out of the room in something suspiciously near a temper, and now I feel sorry and ashamed. I might have said I would go somewhere just to please him. I needn't have stayed for more than five minutes, and he would have gone to Sandown happy in the knowledge that I was going to be amused.

I will yet go to the cat show, I will telephone to Mrs. Prendergast and ask her to go with me. It is not late, I will wear my coolest frock, and Lionel will think I have had a glorious time.

Now for the telephone, and then an awful

## G W E N D A

half-hour in Fanchette's hands, with a fight over my hair, and a blank refusal to wear a terrible bee-hive which she took upon herself to order because it was so sweet and chic and which she happened to see in Sloane street when her thoughts were far far away—nothing whatever to do with Madame and hats—when suddenly it burst upon her delighted eyes—purple grapes, white currants, red tomatoes, all creeping round the bee-hive, and as in a flash she saw it on Madame's head and was knocked all of a heap at the beauty thereat! And to humour her I tried it on, and with clasped hands and eyes raised to Heaven she raved. Why, I cannot imagine. For my nose and mouth only were visible, and I exactly felt like a horse in blinkers. In preference I stick to cart wheels and creations that resemble fully-rigged battleships; and I catch in all the doors, and jab men in the eye, but Fanchette and Lionel are happy, so what would you? And I am hoping against hope that a day will never arrive on which they will insist upon my appearing in a busby. Jam pots and bee-hives are bad, but busbies are worse.

If there is one thing that I dislike doing in

## G W E N D A

my life, it is telephoning. It looks so easy, and would be if only Balbriggan would cease prowling about the hall, and Hillingbran from secreting himself behind doors, and their both listening to my 'Hellos,' and 'Are you there' and 'What's that?' and watching the flush of anger mount to my brow.

Mrs. Prendergast is undoubtedly charming and everything that her husband imagines her to be, but she is not only unintelligible when speaking through a telephone, but almost stone deaf. This is a sample of our attempt at a conversation this morning. She is "on," and you picture her pleasant face at the other end.

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Prendergast?" pleasantly and very friendly.

"What's that?"

"How do you do?"

"I can't hear what you say."

"I only said 'how do you do?'" shouting, and annoyed at Balbriggan floating down the hall.

"I am sorry, but I can't hear."

"Never mind," I bawl, trying to keep calm.

"I am Mrs. Conyngham and I want to know, if you have nothing better on, if you will go with me to a cat show this morning."

## G W E N D A

"Mrs. who?"

"Mrs. Conyngham."

"Oh, Mrs. Conyngham. How do you do?"

"That's what I said at the beginning."

"Said what?"

"How do you do?"

"I can't hear you."

"It's of no consequence," checking a wild desire to dash the transmitter against the wall.

A pause. Then: "Can I do anything for you?"

"Oh, yes. Will you come with me to the Cat Show, if you have nothing better to do?"

"The what show?"

"The Cat Show."

"A hat show. Yes, where is it? I love hats."

"A *Cat* Show. Persians, Angoras, Tabbies, Tortoiseshells," I scream, and now everyone in the house can hear me.

"Oh, furs. Didn't you say Persian, Angora? I suppose they are being sold off cheap. Yes, I'll come."

"But I didn't say furs, I said cats."

"Said what?"

"Cats." Balbriggan approaches, and I simply foam at the mouth. "If you would speak quite quietly, Madame, just your ordinary

## G W E N D A

voice, you would be heard perfectly," he whispers.

"And so I am," I retorted, "only this lady happens to be stone deaf."

"Which makes it a little awkward, Madame."

"Which makes it exceedingly awkward, Balbriggan."

"Are you still there Mrs. Prendergast?"

"Yes."

(Now I am speaking in my ordinary voice)  
"I said, Cat Show."

"Oh! Yes, I should like it immensely, Mrs. Conyngham. I shall be delighted if you will lunch with me afterward. Just ourselves."

"Thanks awfully. Can you be ready by twelve o'clock and I will call for you?"

"Yes, thanks. Good-bye for the present." And she rang off, and now that her hearing seemed less impaired I felt quite anxious to prolong the conversation.

Fanchette was in an unusually tiresome mood. She held forth on the charms of the bee-hive hat till I was worn out. Being small in circumference it was the very thing for a show where the rooms would be crowded, or the busby of forget-me-nots with my blue chiffon——

## G W E N D A

"Fanchette," I interrupted sternly, "if I were going to a show of the British Bee Keepers' Association I would wear the skep even though it attracted a swarm of bees to settle on my head. But it would be incongruous with cats. Nor will I have anything to do with a forget-me-not busby, or an old gold tegal jam pot. In a weak moment I was cajoled into flinging away good money upon them. They can repose on the shelves of my wardrobe for you to feast your eyes upon, but they will *never* rest upon my head. Give me my black shady crinoline for the morning is hot. And *don't* argue."

So finally I arrived at Mrs. Prendergast's door at twelve o'clock feeling more fit for bed than anything else.

But her pleasant companionship soon dissipated my weariness, and the mere satisfaction of looking at her well repaid me for the sacrifice I was making for Lionel.

"You *do* look nice," I said, "and *you* are wearing a jampot?"

"Oh, they happen to suit me," she laughed, "though they are hideous. It was nice of you to suggest my going with you."

"I was dull."



## G W E N D A

"Dull! and a bride of a couple of months' standing!"

"I suppose that is why I am dull. Had I been married for some time I should have shaken down into my new environment, and had plenty of real friends, I hope. Granty and I never were dull——"

"Who is Granty?" she interrupted. And it took me quite ten minutes to make her understand exactly what you were like. And she was so interested. She seemed to love to hear about your three pink shawls—morning, afternoon, and best—morning—faded; afternoon—fringe; best—bobs; also about your silk aprons and fur-lined velvet boots. And of your interest in politics, and your grief that the country is so going to the dogs, and of your admiration for the House of Lords and all things Imperial, and your detestation of the wild acrobatic and juggling feats of the Liberals. And of your affection for Mrs. Humphry Ward as a novelist because she is dignified and clean in her writing, and of your fear of old Hannah, and easy pleasantry with your second cousin, old Admiral Beancroft. Of your adventurous life in Australia when you were a child and could fish and shoot and ride with anybody, and of your

## G W E N D A

life in Winchester when you were grown up and married. And then of your removal to Sunset at Silvercombe and the arrival of *me*. And at this point we arrived at the Cat Show and Mrs. Prendergast said you must be a perfect duck, and I replied she was not wanting in perspicacity.

Some of the pussies were lovely, with long silky coats and big ruffs and mild expressive eyes. I would much prefer a blue Persian to Shandy, and I am sure it would be more companionable on my drives, even though it went to sleep, than a creature that is always trying to bite.

I greatly enjoyed my lunch with Mrs. Prendergast; she is so gay and interesting and really nice. Two little girls with big blue eyes and fair pigtails sat one on each side of her—twins, delightfully solemn and shy, and amusing when you had once drawn them out. Jane and Elizabeth they gravely told me were their names. "Are you sure you didn't say Marjory and Dorothy?" I asked them. "Your names seem too refreshing to be true." And they nodded their heads and said they really *were* Jane and Elizabeth. They also called their mother, "Mother" and not "Mummy." They don't

## G W E N D A

care much for lessons, but have a partiality for grammar and parsing. They parsed without invitation "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day," at a breathless rate, and had an argument as to whether knell was a common noun, of the neuter gender, or a proper noun, of the feminine gender.

"Why, it isn't a girl's name, goose," said Jane scornfully. But Elizabeth wasn't quite sure and appealed to me.

"Knell? Why knell means," I said flurriedly, "Oh, just the knell of parting day; it certainly doesn't mean a girl's name."

"I see," said little Elizabeth politely, but she was telling a fib.

Besides parsing they also rather liked *Peter Pan*, but not Tinker Bell, said Jane, it was a silly thing and didn't mean anything. They also liked strawberries and cream, and the book, *Flat Iron for a Farthing*, and Jonathan Bliss, their coachman, because he had a sweet weeny baby and three white kittens with their eyes shut.

When they bade me good-bye they pressed me to come again and they would parse some more, perhaps "Toll for the brave," or "Break, break, break on thy cold gray stones, O sea!" In fact

## G W E N D A

they would say the last now if I liked, but their mother said we would excuse them to-day.

"They *are* rather nice," she agreed, "and their father is just silly over them."

"I am sure he would be silly over anything he possessed."

"You have noticed that?" she smiled.

"He talked of you nearly the whole time that night you dined with us," I said.

"How boring! I wish I could break him of it. I am certain that our friends must get to hate me. And it doesn't prove that a man is a bit fond of his wife when he keeps dragging her into the conversation. I know a man who asks you if you have seen his wife every time he meets you, and he is notorious for his infidelities."

"Do you like men?" I enquired suddenly.

"Very much, don't you?" she laughed.

"I am not sure yet," I stirred my coffee slowly, "I am trying to find out. I was brought up to distrust and dislike them. Granty hated most of them. Why I never knew."

"Perhaps her marriage was unfortunate?"

"I don't know. She never told me. But if it had been, would it make her unjust toward all men? She is broad-minded."

## G W E N D A

"It depends on her temperament. And how much her husband abused her."

I felt I must tell you this, Granty. It seemed unfair for Mrs. Prendergast to make such a suggestion, and you not to know it. But do not tell me anything you don't want me to know; and yet I can't get it out of my mind, her words. I hate to think you have *ever* been unhappy. And what I *do* know is that you could never have been unjust. Your dislike for men is not prejudice but temperamental. That is how I have always regarded it. Just as some people dislike dogs, and women are frightened of mice. Isn't it so, dear?

But Mrs. Prendergast was telling me what *she* thought of men.

"I like them for their simplicity and transparency," she said. "You can see through them as easily as you can see through a highly polished window. But try to see through a woman and you might just as well look for your reflection in a brackish pool with the sun behind a cloud. There are exceptions to every rule, of course, but the majority of men's minds are like a book with all its pages cut, clear type, large print, plenty of capital letters. I know all this has been said hundreds of times, but it

## G W E N D A

makes it none the less true. And to me it is their charm. The simple and elemental ones are far and away the nicest as husbands, don't you think so? A man comes home from business, he meets you in the hall and tells you you can buy the handsomest emerald bracelet to be found in Bond street. You know he has made a good spec. The next day he trips over the mat and swears horribly, his liver is out of order. He tells you no man ever had a more charming or delightful wife and that you may ask your Aunt Maria to come and visit you; he has just beaten his man at golf five up and four. You ask Aunt Maria, and by the time she arrives he has developed a bad cold, and Aunt Maria wishes she had stayed at home with Uncle Robert with whose particular species of temper she is familiar after thirty years' experience. You always know what the simple men are up to, and why they are up to it. Beware of the man who never loses his temper, who never turns a hair when his wife's flirtations are the talk of the neighbourhood, who smiles when he ought to be swearing, and who strokes the cat when he ought to be throwing hassocks at it. The man who has his temper well under control and who always turns the same smiling face to

## G W E N D A

the world, is the one who usually rules the roost and brings havoc into other men's hen roosts." She poured herself out another cup of coffee, and lighted a cigarette.

"So you think to achieve happiness in a household a woman should rule?" I asked.

"Certainly, if she does it tactfully. A man can go to his office and boss dozens of clerks and subordinates, and bang about, and say he won't have things, and raise Cain generally, but he is never a happy man if he does it at home, or rather his wife isn't happy, and then, of course, if he's at all nice, he's miserable. A man may lose his temper at home, trip over mats and swear, grumble about the omelette being burnt, scream at the canary for singing too loudly, but he mustn't boss. A really sensible man likes things fixed up for him. Invitations accepted or refused without appealing to him, the destination of his holidays arranged without discussion. The man who says decidedly "we'll go to Eastbourne or to Scotland," and who won't go to Mrs. Pikestaff's for the dinner will be bad, and a lot of nobodies will be there, and who says *he* shall give cook notice unless *you* do, is the man to avoid. His convictions are too assured and his habits too settled.

## G W E N D A

He will always have his Yorkshire pudding *with* his beef, and never before or after like the dear people in the North," she finished with a laugh.

"But the man who always does as his wife wishes is surely a bit of a fool," I demurred.

"You wait till you have been married a few years and then see if you are inclined to offer the same proposition," she replied succinctly. "But he mustn't know he isn't having his own way about everything, his wife will be too sensible and tactful for that. Or if he does know, he is too artful to let her know that he knows, and so they're both happy."

"Dear me, how clever you are," I observed, "and as you appear to be so up in the subject of marriage can you give me any hints as to how a girl should remain happy in her wedded state, as well as how to manage her husband? It doesn't seem to me that successful management and happiness necessarily go hand in hand, and happiness to me comes before everything else."

"Of course, it does," she agreed, rising and altering the position of a blind, taking a seat near an open window. "How to arrive at mar-



## G W E N D A

ried happiness if a woman doesn't care about management?" she said thoughtfully. "Well, to begin with she should start expecting very little instead of very much. It is the sentimental girl who has devoured silly love stories, who has derived all her ideas of love and marriage from sensational rubbish, whose heroes and heroines are soulful, unnatural, bloodless creatures without human sins and irritable tempers, who raises the first cloud in the horizon of matrimonial happiness. She is sensitive and ready to take offence at the most trifling word. She has for some months been sitting on a pedestal while a fool of a man grovels at her feet and talks nonsense. He has placed her there and not unnaturally she enjoys her lofty position. He tells her she is a goddess. He looks into her eyes and says they are like stars, and her mouth which he kisses he likens unto a newly-opened rosebud. He makes her believe that her intellect is nothing short of remarkable, that she is more beautiful, more charming, more virtuous, more heroic than any woman who has ever breathed. She laughingly denies it, and all the same feels a sort of Grace Darling and Joan of Arc and Florence Nightingale rolled into one, with the face and figure

## G W E N D A

of a Venus de Milo, and the brain of a George Sand and Madame de Staël. She is almost annoyed that her family does not see her in this new light, and offended when they offer her a common thing like a pickled herring the day before she is married. And one can't blame her, it is the man's fault, not hers. And then, within a month after her marriage, a morning comes when she stops feeling like any of these things, and all because the eggs are hard-boiled or a button is off some unimportant garment of her husband. Flop she comes to earth, a little stunned and amazed, with feelings lacerated and tears in her eyes. Then the man, who is really quite a good fellow, kisses the tears away and calls himself a brute, and for a brief period she is again reinstated in the good opinion of herself. In six months' time when the tears still come at an impatient or rough word, he looks worried and irritated and tells her not to be silly, and in twelve months not to be a fool, and he bangs the door when he leaves the house. And now the critical moment has arrived in which she must decide whether her marriage shall be peaceful and moderately happy, or stormy and unhappy. So she sits down and reviews the advantages and disad-

## G W E N D A

vantages of the married state: She has a house of her own, servants of her own. She can choose her own dishes and the hours for meals, and do as she likes. She has more money to spend than when she was single. And she has the protection of a man who is right at heart, a bit selfish and rough in his speech perhaps, but with no vices and ready to stand by her in a tight place——”

“But there doesn’t sound much romance in this,” I interrupted.

“No,” she returned, “because there is no romance in marriage, only in courtship. The minute marriage takes place, romance departs. It is inevitable. A man to his valet is never a hero, neither is he to his wife, nor she a heroine to her husband. But if the one has tact and a sense of humour, is undemonstrative and not lavish with her kisses, if she refrains from referring to what he said and did before marriage; and if the other leads a straight life and has his temper fairly well under control, they will be happier married than single. They will have founded a home and probably a family. They will care for one another in an unromantic, calm, comfortable fashion; marriage has brought them a sense of completion, a feel-

## G W E N D A

ing of satisfaction, and they will be contented. What more can anybody want?"

"A great deal," I cried, springing up and crossing over to the window. "Much more than this. That is only the life of animals. Men and women require sympathy and understanding. They need the gentle word, the caress—at least women do when life becomes hard. They starve and shrivel up without affection as a plant fades from want of water. For every harsh word a woman receives from the man she loves there is a little scar in her soul. Some women's souls, I believe, are one big scar, and when that scar is healed and she feels no further sensation or pain, it means she has become hard." I broke off at her look of surprise and I stammered when she said, "How do you know all this?"

"I feel it within me," I replied. "I don't know, but it is true. It is writ on some women's faces. I am beginning to think that women should only have children."

Again she looked at me, and I knew that she wondered at my warmth.

"But it is not always the women," she said, dropping her light half bantering tone and becoming grave, "men often suffer too in their

## G W E N D A

marriages. Some wives are so unreasonable and selfish. They can't see when their men are tired out and worried by their business, and just want to be let alone. They are annoyed if they are not always willing and ready to go out with them to some so-called amusement, they are vexed if they receive curt monosyllables to their endless questions and chatter. They feel aggrieved at what they term the dullness of their husbands. They forget that while they are fresh at the end of a day which has found no more arduous task for them than the ordering of the dinner, arranging the flowers, being fitted for a new gown and playing bridge, that the husband's brain and hands have been at it hard all day in the pursuit of that money which brings so many little comforts and luxuries to the home."

"I know," I said. "I forget. Perhaps women leave too much of the worries and troubles of life to the men, and they don't see the beam in their own eyes."

"I am sure they don't. But mind you, in spite of my defence of husbands I *do* think they are more to blame than the wives if the course of their marriage does not run smooth."

"I should say that yours ran without so

## G W E N D A

much as a ripple," I smiled, "but perhaps you are an exceptional wife."

"It is nice of you to say so, and I let my husband think it. But, as a matter of fact, and I tell you this in confidence, mine is rather an exceptional husband," and she leant toward me whispering the last in my ear with a comical little gesture to keep silent.

"Must you go?" she said. "Won't you stay to tea? I am on my pet topic and am so enjoying myself."

I told her that I couldn't as there were several things I wanted to do before dinner, and that it was not often I had an afternoon to myself.

"May I come again soon?" I asked as she went to the door with me. "No, don't call a cab. I want to walk."

"Come whenever you can," she returned heartily. "We long to know you better. You see my husband has known yours for years. I have not seen much of him myself, he has always been such an engaged man, an eligible bachelor is very much run after wherever he is."

"Were you surprised to hear he had married a girl from the country?" I queried.

## G W E N D A

"Well, I was rather," she admitted, "and he was no bad judge."

"I think your great charm lies in making people feel pleased with themselves," I laughed as I walked down to the gate, "and probably you are not sincere."

"How can you say such a thing?" she laughed back. "Besides sincere people are always disliked. A woman once kindly told me that I had omitted to remove the powder from my nose, and I have hated her ever since."

I walked home through the Park. The shade of the trees was pleasant after the heat of the day, and the grass and flowers grateful to the eye. The road was crammed with carriages, and the footpaths packed with smartly dressed people; but I scarcely saw them. Through the crowds I moved, my parasol tilted behind my head, thinking deeply of Mrs. Prendergast's words, of our conversation. Had I been feeling like a Grace Darling, a George Sand, a Venus de Milo rolled in one? Was I expecting too much from my husband? Demanding too much attention and affection and adulation? Because his wooing had been a passionate one, was I foolish to expect it to go on after marriage? Mrs. Prendergast had said women

## G W E N D A

should be chary of offering their kisses and showing too much affection. That they were idiotic to remind their husbands of their little speeches, of their little sacrifices, of their words of love before marriage. Husbands looked foolish and shuffled their newspapers about when their wives indulged in this.

There seemed so much to remember. A wife must be sympathetic without being demonstrative, intelligent without being clever. Manage her husband with tact and never let him know it. Receive harsh words with a smile, and his indifference with cheerful acquiescence, always look nice, never have a headache, and always be in good spirits. I collided with an elderly stout gentleman in my absorption, and although he raised his hat at my apology he looked more inclined to fling it at me. I arrived home depressed but full of good resolves.

Lionel came in about seven o'clock. He too was depressed. He had backed no winner. One horse had scratched, another had bolted, and a third come in at the pace of a costermonger's donkey. I sympathised with him, and when he became silent I fell into silence too. He was tired like Mrs. Prendergast's weary business husbands, he mustn't be worried with



## G W E N D A

questions and silly chatter. Quietly I munched salted almonds. Suddenly he turned upon me. "You're a nice cheerful wife to come home to. Is anything the matter?"

"Oh, no," I replied. "I thought you were tired," and I proceeded to tell him of my afternoon with Mrs. Prendergast and the cat show.

"I don't like that woman," he said as he followed me up the stairs to the drawingroom.

"You don't like Mrs. Prendergast?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"You have such a habit of repeating one's remarks, Gwenda. I wish you wouldn't," he said irritably.

"Have I? I'm sorry," I returned, trying not to get hurt. "I won't do it again."

He sank down in an armchair and picked up a paper, and I picked up a book "Septimus" and I soon became absorbed. Presently his voice came to me plaintively, "You *are* entertaining. I have been out the whole day and you just sit here and read."

"Would you like me to play to you?" I put down the book and moved toward the piano.

"For Heaven's sake don't if it's classical music, I can't bear those dull things you play. Can you manage 'The Merry Widow' waltz?"

## G W E N D A

"I am afraid I can't," I said, feeling most awfully sorry that I couldn't oblige him. "But I know 'Waltz Bleu.'"

"That old thing! No, please don't. But never mind, I think I'll go and have a game of billiards with Dollington, if you don't mind."

So I cheerfully said I didn't, which was quite true, for I was beginning to feel tired of being tactful and patient.

And I am sitting in my dressing-gown in the boudoir which is nice and cool to-night. Soon I am going to bed. It is nearly eleven o'clock. I am depressed still, and at the same time angry with myself because I am so foolishly sensitive. I am hurt because Lionel prefers Dollington's company to mine, and I am vexed because I didn't know "The Merry Widow" waltz. I shall buy it to-morrow, and I am going to learn to play billiards. There is a jolly table here. It is coming home to me that I am no great catch as a wife. Still Lionel knew of my ignorance before we were married. Good-night. And now I come to think of it, Mrs. Prendergast advised me never to think or refer to our relations with one another before marriage, and I must try to remember.

## G W E N D A

July 19th.—Don't try to find a maid named Martha for me. Lionel wishes me to keep Fanchette. A country girl, he says, would be sure to have rough red hands and would be no good at doing my hair.

"But I mostly do it myself," I said; and he replied "Ah, that explains things," and I didn't ask him what he meant. I find that it is better sometimes to leave things unexplained.

We lunched with some rather dull people to-day named Heckles but they are very rich and Mrs. Heckles drove up to the Ritz in a gorgeous motor car, lined with pale blue. Mr. Heckles talked of investments, and stocks and mines, and companies most of the time, and when my attention wandered he rapped on the table with his fork. Once I ventured to say that for every person who made money by speculation somebody else must be the loser and sufferer, and I might have thrown a bombshell at his head.

"What do you know of finance, young lady?" he enquired with an attempt at pleasant badinage.

I admitted not very much, and he asked me why then had I made such an observation.

"Well it seems to me a plain fact that if one

## G W E N D A

man makes a profit in a deal another man makes a loss."

"Not at all," he said in a loud voice. "You ladies must stick to your frocks and bridge and amusements, and leave money matters alone."

And I dared not venture to remind him that he had introduced the subject himself and not I; besides as we were his guests—I certainly a very unwilling one—it would hardly have been polite.

Afterward Lionel told me that I had made very unfortunate remarks at times, and I could find nothing to say. I didn't feel sorry and I wasn't going to say I was. Mr. Heckles is a nasty rude man, and I think few rich people are nice.

Your loving,

GWENDA.

## LETTER VIII

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, S. W.;  
July 26th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I met such a nice man last evening, a queer, irregular-featured, thin, brown, smallish man, or perhaps he looked small by Lionel. And I shouldn't exactly say I met him for I had fallen asleep in a conservatory and when I awoke I found him there. We were at a supper and cotillion given by the Prendergasts. Lionel dances beautifully. Cotillions, of course, are quite beyond my reach, and after watching some little time, feeling tired, I slipped quietly away to the dim conservatory—softly lighted and sweet with the scent of a tea rose which clambered over the roof. The chairs were seductive, the air was warm, and sounds of dance music came from the distant ball room. We had been up late for eight consecutive nights. Can you wonder I slept?

When I woke I found this man gravely re-

## G W E N D A

garding me and I thought a little anxiously. He was seated near to me.

"I hope I didn't snore?" I asked quickly.

"Only a little," he assured me. "You see you were on your back, and it is an uncomfortable position."

I laughed, and looked at him with interest.

"If I was snoring, I think it would have shown greater delicacy of feeling if you had gone away," I said gravely.

"That was my first intention, but on examining your face, you were so white I thought you were ill and hoped to be able to render you some assistance."

"Do I look ill?" I enquired anxiously.

He hesitated. "You do rather, and I hope you don't mind my saying so."

"I am very tired, that is all. This has been a hard season, and my first."

"Your first?" He spoke incredulously.

"Why are you so surprised? Do I look as old as that? First you tell me I look ill, which really means I look plain, and then you are frightfully surprised when I say it is my first season," I laughed.

A smile passed over his thin brown features. "I am sorry if I have appeared rude," he said

## G W E N D A

simply. "I certainly did not think you looked plain, and I *did* think you looked older than a débutante."

"You are quite right. I am twenty-five. And don't you think we might introduce ourselves as our hostess isn't here? Or perhaps you are going to dance?"

"No, like you I am tired. I have had a hard day."

"Well, in the ordinary way you would be presented to me. So will you tell me your name first?" I said.

"Peter."

"Is that all? Just Peter?"

"Yes, for to-night. I am tired of my other name. I have heard it so much to-day."

"You are a Member of Parliament?" I queried.

"God forbid," he replied with great earnestness.

"You are not complimentary to His Majesty's Government, Mr. Peter."

"No." He offered me a cushion for my back and a stool for my feet, and asked me if he could procure me any refreshment. I told him No.

"You would like to stay here?" he asked.

## G W E N D A

"Yes, but don't let me keep you," I returned.

"Why, I want to stay above all things, Miss— Will you tell me your name now? It is your turn."

"Gwenda."

"Only Gwenda?"

"Gwendolen Mary, or Gwenda, for short."

"No other name?"

"No, like you, I have only one name tonight."

"It is a pretty one," he said thoughtfully.

There was something very straight and kindly about this man, and he was a gentleman in every sense of the word one could see, gentle and considerate. I felt I wanted to know him better. His face certainly would have been described as plain, but his head was well-formed and clever with good brain development above the eyebrows. Do you remember how you and I used to search around for brainy bumps, and how very flat most of our friends' foreheads were? What I was most struck with were his hands, they were beautifully shaped with delicate sensitive-looking fingers. "Not an artist," I said to myself. I have observed that the fingers of most artists I have met are podgy with broad finger tips and nails. And not a



## G W E N D A

musician, and not a literary man. I felt he was none of these. What was he? I very much wanted to know. Perhaps his conversation would enlighten me, but it was mostly about yachting and fishing and approaching holidays.

He was surprised that I didn't want to go to Scotland, and I did not tell him it was because I wished to go to you at Silvercombe.

"Scotland," he said with enthusiasm, "is an ideal country for holidays, heather spreading a carpet of royal purple on the hills and moors to the feet of the lovely mournful lochs. Fir trees glooming against the sky, bracing air with a tang of peat in it, trout streams brawling and singing through the valleys, Scotch beef, Scotch scones, and a vigorous kindly people."

His ardour affected me. "It sounds delicious after the heat and fatigue of London," I sighed.

"Why do you do so much?" he asked sympathetically.

"I can't help it. Force of circumstances. Everybody does it, and most of them seem to enjoy it. I shall learn to enjoy it too in time. I love the country and I say it in all humility, because perhaps you have noticed that when people love the country they are generally so proud of it. They look down upon the common

## G W E N D A

herd that enjoys the pleasures of town. Did it ever strike you how conceited Thoreau and Richard Jefferies were at times? I always feel that Thoreau wouldn't have lived in a wood if the rest of the world had been unaware of the fact."

He smiled. "And you love the country because you really *do* love it?"

"I love it because I know it so well. Usage, it is said, is second nature. I am so used to the country that it seems part of myself. Had I been born and brought up in a town I should most probably love it as I now love the country. I understand the country, and when you understand a thing you usually like it. I am beginning to understand bridge and like it. I know from the signs when there is going to be a good hay crop. I know when the beans will be a failure, and when the damsons will bow down the trees with their weight. I know when a storm is coming long before the clouds appear in the sky, and I know when we are in for a spell of fine weather. All the insects and caterpillars and flies and birds of country life are known to me. The thrill one experiences in discovering the nest of a plover after tracking it for some minutes is only equalled by the joy

## G W E N D A

of finding the first bit of coltsfoot after the long barren days of winter. In town I am always knocking up against my own ignorance and it hurts my pride. The customs and social amenities and etiquette of these people are as a Greek book to me. But I am learning rapidly, and Fanchette, my French maid, teaches me a lot." I had forgotten I had only known this man for a quarter of an hour.

"And don't you like people?" he enquired.

"Individually but not collectively. It is when people are in a mass that I am frightened. The very thought of being announced into a drawingroom fills me with dread. I square my shoulders and throw back my head and people say I am haughty. My eyes seek the carpet and I trip over my train, and they say I am gauche. I was never nervous at Silvercombe; I had known the few residents since I was a child so I expect I was natural with them; and now with these people I am always self-conscious."

He nodded sympathetically. "Yes," he said, "go on." And then suddenly remembering that I was telling all this to a stranger I drew in my horns. "No," I said, "*you* talk now, I have had my innings."

"With pleasure, if I only knew what would

## G W E N D A

interest you. Do you object to my smoking?" He drew out a cigarette case. "How cool and pleasant it is here. I never expected to enjoy myself so much. I am not paying empty compliments, but I don't care for dancing."

"Why did you come?"

"Why did you?"

"I had to."

"So had I."

"Are you married?"

"Dear me, no. But the hostess, Mrs. Prendergast, is my sister."

"O—h!" I said.

"You don't sound pleased."

"No, it's not that, but now I understand why I have been puzzled as to whom you resemble."

"Well, don't say it as though you dislike our appearance so much," he observed plaintively.

I laughed. "On the contrary, I admire your sister immensely. She has a kind face, and yet it is so quizzical, as though she were smiling at the world generally."

"So she is mostly. She hoodwinks her husband and everybody else. Jane is clever, and she is also the kindest-hearted creature in the world."

"Oh, is she?" A merry voice came through

## G W E N D A

the open door of the conservatory. "Peter you are downright rude and unkind. You said you would come and help me. Who is with you? Oh, Mrs. Conyngham!" She trailed toward us in a gown of silver that glittered softly in the subdued light. "I am so glad you two know each other. I always felt you'd be friends. Peter have you been polite to Mrs. Conyngham?"

"Very," I smiled at him, and to my surprise I found he was staring at me fixedly and with a frown between his eyebrows. "Are you Mrs. *Lionel* Conyngham?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes," I said. "Do you know him?"

"I know him very well. Here he is. How do you do, Conyngham?" He nodded curtly. "Good-bye Mrs. Conyngham. You have given me a delightful half hour," and he walked out of the conservatory without another word.

As we drove home Lionel enquired if I had met Peter Drexel before.

"Is that his name?" I asked.

"Yes, a brother of Mrs. Prendergast, and quite a famous surgeon."

"No," I said, "I have not met him before tonight." I felt that was just what he ought to be—a surgeon.

## G W E N D A

"You sounded as though you knew each other well."

"Did we? You see we introduced ourselves," I replied. "I think people who do that always get to know each other pretty quickly, the formal barrier is broken down at once. Besides Mr. Peter Drexel appears to be very informal. He told me I snored. I had fallen asleep in the conservatory. You soon get to know a person after that. Also he told me I looked white and seedy. I might have known he was a doctor."

"H'm!" said my husband. "I can't have you flirting with every Dick, Tom, and Harry you meet."

"Mr. Drexel certainly doesn't come under the category of a Dick, Tom, and Harry," I laughed. "And we didn't flirt."

And I went to bed, Granty, strangely happy that Lionel had exhibited a little spasm of jealousy. I felt it was a good sign.

July 29th.—I am filled with sorrow that your disappointment is so great at our not spending a little time with you at Silvercombe before going to Scotland. I feel absolutely too sick for words about it. I had pictured the lovely

## G W E N D A

time we three would have had together: the walks in the evening up to the Coast Guard, tea out of the dainty Crown Derby under the scented lime trees in the afternoon, bathing in the morning. Calls on old friends and showing off my handsome husband with great pride, which I was too shy to do before we were married. Foursomes on the links with dear old Colonel Mainprice and Mary Middleton, lazy loungings in the hammock with Creamy the cat purring on my knee—and there would have been much lazing I think for I am feeling tired and seedy—and pleasant evenings in the drawing-room, now so fresh I know with its clean chintz bibs and tuckers, and roses on the polished table in the corner, and on the mantel-shelf, and piano, and what-not, (nobody in London knows what a what-not is) and in every imaginable spot and corner; and purple clematis flowers peeping their soft velvety faces through the open windows. I have pictured it all, times without number, Granty: I never imagined I could have been so homesick in so short a time. What makes me I wonder? I am getting used to this life. I am enjoying a great deal of it. Many of the people improve on acquaintance. They are fond of pleasure and

## G W E N D A

society and everything that money can buy; but why shouldn't they be? I ask myself. And they are jolly and kindly and unself-conscious, and if they get the best out of life it would be superior to say they shouldn't so long as they do not forget the poor people who have a worse time than themselves. And yet I ache to see you. I have tried everything in my power to induce Lionel to say we can go for one fortnight to Silvercombe, and he won't. And Mrs. Prendergast said it was so easy to manage men. I have been firm in a morning in a tailor-made and linen collar; tactful in an afternoon in a lace ruffle and plumed picture hat; beseeching between tea and dinner in a sweet pastel-blue tea-gown, reclining with my head amongst pale yellow silken cushions; and positively imploring at night in a simple white dinner gown, with a red rose behind my ear like a girl in a book. But everything has failed.

I might have been arguing with St. Paul when he was in one of his specially antagonistic, anti-women moods. I would just like Mrs. Prendergast to try and manage Lionel. When I was firm and argumentative, he stared and said he had no idea I was such an unreasonable girl. When I was beseeching and inclined to be a lit-



## G W E N D A

tle emotional, he kissed me kindly and, at the same time, mentioned that tears in a woman was to him one of her most futile weapons. When I tried to be alluring and irresistible, he simply said the rose behind my ear was tickling his nose and he wasn't sure if he liked flowers in the hair. And when I tried flying in a temper, he walked out of the room with a shocked expression.

It is quite evident that Mr. Prendergast and Lionel are built of very different material. Mr. Prendergast may swear when he trips over mats and be fiery and easily extinguished, Lionel simply reprimands a servant for leaving a mat in the way, and is self-contained and of extremely slow combustion. You might try to extinguish his fire, but nothing would get it under, neither the hose pipe nor garden soil once he had made up his mind to go on burning.

In my secret heart I respect and admire his strength of character and firmness of will, I despise a weak man, as you know, but I do wish he would be less firm about Silvercombe.

He says he doesn't know how I can wish him to go to a seaside place in August when it would be crammed with indecently dressed children with buckets and spades building idiotic

## G W E N D A

forts; and fathers in Panama hats and morning coats and knickerbockers; and mothers in short skirts and pipe-clayed boots and no hats and dishevelled frowsy locks. Nothing to do and nobody to know. Perhaps it *would* be dull for him. And I had my way in going to Brittany, so it is his turn now. You, not understanding men, and you can't understand them, Granty, or you wouldn't be so unjust to them, will say he is selfish. But he isn't. Why should he give in to me any more than I to him? Don't you think that we women expect men to give in to us too much? As you know, I am frightfully disappointed that we shall not be with you, but can't you see his point? I can, at least I *nearly* can.

So we are going to Scotland. First to the house of a real laird of the Clan—oh, I've forgotten the name of it—an uncle by marriage of Lionel, a bachelor living in the heart of the Trossachs. There are to be about a dozen guests, and there will be a little fishing and shooting—and I find Lionel is keen on the last; and there will be drives and walks, and bridge at night. So we ought to have a good time. The thought alone of bees humming amongst the heather intoxicates me. But the sound of bees

## G W E N D A

humming above the moors of Silvercombe would be best of all. Oh, when shall I see you, dear!

August 1st.—Again I want council with Belinda Ann. I am in sore difficulty, and know not what to do. Oh, that I had the wings of a dove and could fly to Silvercombe for advice and help!

Lionel has invited Lady Rivers to dine with us to-morrow night.

We met her at Goodwood last Thursday. Lionel and I were strolling about after lunch and I was feeling in radiant spirits. The day was exquisite, clear and cool after recent rain, the country round Goodwood is beautiful. Two of my horses had won. We had had a jolly lunch and Lionel had just complimented me on my costume. What more could a girl desire? When, as a bolt from the blue, Lady Rivers bore down upon us with outstretched hands and smile of welcome.

Of course, she looked perfect. It is positively exasperating the power some women possess of making every other woman feel dowdy when in their proximity. A minute before I had regarded my frock with satisfaction, now nothing seemed more desirable than the

## G W E N D A

long cut-away black satin coat she was wearing over a white gown. But, Granty, I don't think I really minded her clothes, it was the way she was looking at Lionel. How do these women do it? They drop their heads modestly and then peep up from under their eyelashes. If I tried to do it I should simply squint. Anyway Lionel seemed to enjoy it, and gazed back with unconcealed admiration. Now you will say I am vulgarly jealous. And do you know I don't believe I am, I don't think I ever should be jealous of Lionel. I feel like this about it. If my husband ever wanted another woman I shouldn't want to keep him. There would be no happiness to me in succeeding in having him at my side if he wanted to be elsewhere. I should be too proud. If he were merely indulging in a passing flirtation, perhaps I would make an effort to induce him to flirt with *me* instead; I would wear my prettiest gown and smile. But if he genuinely loved another woman, I should pack my boxes and leave him a clear field. Don't you agree with me in this? Women are wanting in pride and self-respect if they remain with a man who has ceased to love them. At any rate that is my way of thinking. Had Lady Rivers been a nice woman

## G W E N D A

Lionel could have flirted with her at Goodwood to his heart's content. But she is a bad woman, of that I am convinced.

When I heard Lionel inviting her to dine with us, I could scarcely believe my ears. And when he looked at me to second the invitation, I was dumb. I am not quick witted, neither would I stoop to lie and say we had another engagement. I simply stood silent and awkward. Your brains would have helped you out of the dilemma, mine felt addled and refused to work. Lionel was looking at me expectantly; gradually a frown gathered between his eyebrows. Lady Rivers' silky tones relieved the tension: "Perhaps Mrs. Conyngham remembers an engagement which you have forgotten. Men are so naughty in that respect."

"No," he replied, "we have no engagement for a wonder. An old Cambridge friend of mine is dining with us, so we shall just be four. Shan't we, Gwenda?"

Still I could not speak, and apparently grasping the situation, Lionel, with ready wit, suddenly took hold of my arm, and saying that I looked ill and faint and he wondered he hadn't noticed it before, begged Lady Rivers to excuse us. "She is not used to this treadmill of pleas-

## G W E N D A

ure, and is feeling overdone and seedy, I must get her away from here at once, catch the next train back to town. We shall expect you on Monday night without fail. Good-bye Lady Rivers. Sorry to leave you so abruptly."

And when we had left her, I blazed into anger, "How could you?" I cried. "You know I am not ill, and I absolutely refuse to return to town, and I also absolutely refuse to receive Lady Rivers next Monday."

"You will," he said in that calm even voice which I have learnt to dread.

"The woman is bad," I said passionately.

"You say that because you have heard that she has been divorced from her husband."

"I had not heard it. Neither am I narrow. I think it quite possible for a divorced woman to run a straight decent life after the decree has been made absolute. Many a woman sins from self-sacrifice and devotion. Such women require sympathy and help from the women who have not been tempted. Christ himself taught us this. He believed in justice before all things. Who is without sin? He asked. But Lady Rivers is not one of these, and you know it. You have only to look at her to know that she is not fit to associate with decent wom-

## G W E N D A

en, and I wonder that you could wish to put such an indignity upon me."

I will not give you details of the sad pitiful quarrel that followed. And is it possible that I can be writing to you thus only a little more than three months after our marriage? It seems like some bad dream. And all the time I keep asking myself: "Is it my fault?" It must be. For Lionel loved me when he asked me to be his wife, and he cannot have stopped loving me so quickly. And yet if he still loved me, he would not ask me to do a thing which hurts me so much. Do you think he would? But do not think because of this trouble, of this rift within the lute, that I have ceased to love him. God forbid that. Without my love for my husband I should be like a ship without a rudder, a derelict on the ocean of life. And I think, too, that my love would be of poor stuff, don't you, if it stood no assaults and went down at the first blow? Love that has been tried by fire surely burns brighter for its purification. But, oh, I don't know what to do. We have never touched upon the subject since Thursday last. Five days intervened from the time of the invitation to the dinner. Something might crop up I hoped to prevent its taking place. But noth-

## G W E N D A

ing has and nothing will. This is the evening of the fourth day. To-morrow night at this hour I ought to be dressing to receive Lady Rivers. There will be no time for a letter from you in reply to this. No time for the advice and counsel which I so earnestly desire. I must act on my own initiative, unless your friend Belinda Ann would be good enough to send me a wire saying what she did when placed in a similar position. She could put "Stand to your guns" or "Surrender." And whichever course she advised I should follow, for I am beginning to think she has achieved wisdom after much tribulation.

Expectantly,

GWENDA.



## LETTER IX

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, W.,  
August 3rd.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I stuck to my guns following the advice of Belinda Ann, but the battle was a hard one, and to-day the reflection of a white face—all hair and eyes—stares at me from the mirror. And I am asking myself “was it worth it? Will Lady Rivers’ morals be any the better or worse for my refusing to see her? and have I permanently alienated the affection of my husband?”

I retain my self-respect, about which I feel now absolutely indifferent, and I have a bad sick headache, of which I am cruelly conscious and which has kept me to my bed on a very hot day. Lionel has been conspicuous by his absence, and Fanchette has worried me with eau-de-Cologne handkerchiefs, and gruel and sickly messes till I finally burst into tears and entreated her to leave me. I am wearing a silk and lace nightdress which cost £3.15.0 and there

## G W E N D A

is no one to see it but Shandy, who is curled up at the bottom of the bed and making a disgusting noise, half snore and half overfed grunt. My temperature is 100° and I long to be a spirit sitting in a draught. A nice cool spirit without flesh or bones or principles, especially the last.

This afternoon I am positively envying people who have no principles. They are gay, and good humoured, and generous, as a rule. They have a thoroughly good time, and everybody likes them. They are often tender-hearted, and adored by little children and animals. Just cast your eyes around upon the few—what we should describe as unprincipled—people we have known. There was Captain Reynolds who drank like a fish and was always in debt, and yet whom, at his death, the whole of Silvercombe mourned; and the fisher folk, you will remember, deemed it an honour when they were permitted to carry him to his last resting place. There is Minna Singleton. We know she tells lies, I have detected her in heaps, and her sympathy toward those who are in trouble is unbounded. She sat up the whole of one night with Widow Cowd's baby in her arms hushing and soothing its sufferings. Would Mrs. Prin-

## G W E N D A

gleton, with her unanswering code of honour, have done that? I do not mean that necessarily the highly principled people have fewer lovable qualities than the unprincipled, but I *do* think that as a rule they are less sympathetic, less kindly in their feelings toward the backsliders than the backsliders are toward them. So busy are they in living up to their principles and to the standard they have set up for themselves, that they have no time or inclination to consider the feelings of those who happen, either through carelessness or lack of moral feeling, or lack of healthy training, to regard things from another point of view.

Possibly, had I been friendly toward Lady Rivers I might have helped more than by being unfriendly. I might have proved to her that it is possible to lead as straight and decent a life as one can and at the same time be tolerant and kindly to those whose feet, either through bad influence or bad luck, or want of moral sense, are set upon the crooked paths of life. If the people who try to be good won't help the people who are bad, I can't find much use for Christianity. As it is, Lady Rivers, in all probability, went away raging last night at my not being present at dinner. She is clever and would

## G W E N D A

not believe Lionel's trumped-up excuses of a headache and sudden indisposition. I have gained an enemy, and a dangerous one I am sure. Not that on that account do I regret my action, but because—and, oh, Granty, you will now think I am blaming you for your advice, and I am not. I am blaming myself. I should have acted alone, not sought help from anyone. Given no one a right to interfere in Lionel's and my affairs. It is not straight to him, and—I am afraid he is ceasing to care for me. He said some bitter things to me last evening, things that I have already forgiven but can never forget. He stood over my chair, when I refused to dress, like some dark Fury, threatening, never raising his voice, but threatening, cruel words falling from his lips. His love for me had been a brief passion, a moment's insanity. I was childish, gauche, foolishly simple. Could he have meant all this, and why do I tell you? My heart isn't breaking, because I don't believe it. People say things in their passion they don't mean and soon forget. I, myself, uttered words of which I am now ashamed, and Lionel is a man of strong passion. In a few hours he will be sorry for what he said. Come to me and make friends like the

## G W E N D A

children. And, oh, how I am looking forward to that coming. I have tied my hair with a blue ribbon, and I shall put my arms around his neck and say I am sorry, sorry for having given him cause for anger. And he will kiss me, and this feeling of doubt and distrust which has lately grown upon me, doubt of his love, will be dissipated as the mist before the sun.

Granty, my head is better. Long rays of westering light are filling the room. I hear Lionel's step. I *will* be happy. He is coming along the passage. He has paused at the door. My heart is beating tumultuously . . . he has passed along.

August 5th.—I have been riding most of to-day. The weather is cooler and we have had little showers of rain. I am now quite at home in the saddle. When I was preparing for my first lesson, I was warned by Lionel not to seize the horse by the mane in moments of excitement. Naturally this annoyed me and so put me on my mettle that I mastered the whole art of riding in a very short time. And I love it. You, having ridden so much in Australia, well know the exhilaration of galloping along

## G W E N D A

springy turf on a good mount. And my mare is a beauty: graceful, lithe, swift, mettlesome, only her name spoils her—Elizabeth. Can you imagine the order of mind that christens a horse Elizabeth? It emanated from the groom, a heavy, trustworthy, stout man, who accompanies me on my rides. *His* name is Shrove Tuesday Wilkinson. Needless to mention he was born on pancake day.

With Elizabeth and Shrove Tuesday I went to Richmond Park this morning. I felt bad everywhere—body, soul and spirit. Only wind, untainted by smoke, born of the bracken and trees and fields, would help to ease the ache of me, I felt. Lionel and I were still at enmity though I longed for peace. We breakfasted practically in silence. To all my little overtures of friendship he turned a deaf ear, presenting to me the top of a neatly parted head as he studied his newspaper. I had passed an almost sleepless night. I heard 12, 1, 2, 3, 4 o'clock strike. Between the hours of 12 and 2 I still felt remorseful for my discourtesy to Lady Rivers, and grieved that I had hurt and offended Lionel so much. I ached to get up and tap at his door and tell him I was sorry, and that if he would just give me one kiss of forgiveness

## G W E N D A

I should be able to get to sleep. But pride kept my head glued to my hot pillow. Then I began to turn and twist about like a meat-jack in front of a fire. My blue ribbon tickled my face and I tore it off, my heavy plait tickled the back of my neck and I pinned it up on top. I turned my pillow in unison with my body, and each side seemed hotter than the last. I counted sheep through a gate and repeated "if a herring and a half weighed—" and I couldn't get any further for I had forgotten what they ought to weigh, and tried so hard to remember that I began to cry. I cried till I was exhausted, and then I began to be hungry and I think that is the last and worst stage of wakefulness. Once you are assailed by hunger, no more sleep till it is satisfied. Longingly I thought of glasses of milk, bread and butter, of cool greengages and oranges. I switched on the light, rose noiselessly and searched the room for food. A well-trained maid, such as Fanchette, would be certain to leave a tin of biscuits handy, but she hadn't. She thought only of the clothing of my body, not of its nourishment. I could wear a tulle busby and die of starvation. Martha, with the smooth brown hair, I felt, would never have neglected to place sustenance at my bedside.

## G W E N D A

I could have wept again from disappointment. Suddenly my roving eyes caught the beautiful sight of a box of Turkish delight which reposed at the corner of the mantelshef. You probably have never used Turkish delight very spongy and very nutty as a food to allay the pangs of your hunger at four o'clock in the morning. You have never fastened your teeth into its adhesive softness when the rest of the world was sleeping. If you haven't, don't, because next morning you will wish you hadn't. You would have preferred risking a descent to the larder and the possibility of falling into the hands of your butler who had mistaken you for a burglar.

As I stared at the parting of Lionel's hair and toyed with a bit of sole, that Turkish delight was very present. My mouth was dry, my body was limp. Feverishly I searched about for pleasant conversation. I tried the weather, the theatre, the new fashion in men's overcoats, the cultivation of tobacco in England, but the bent head never looked up, and I received monosyllables by way of reply to each of my questions. Gradually my pleasantries fizzled out, and slowly my temper rose, slowly but surely; and once, Granty, you said it was sweet. Why should I be treated in this manner? I fumed.



## G W E N D A

I had done and said everything to express my sorrow for my inhospitality. I longed to be friends. Longed to thresh the whole thing out, and this cold silence was freezing me, choking the love out of me. I jumped up from my chair, kicked Shandy out of the way, told Balbriggan to give instructions for my horse to be saddled and round in a quarter of an hour, and dashed out of the room, giving the door a terrific bang. What do you think of that? Banged the door like a passionate uncontrolled schoolgirl. Even now I tremble when I think of the way the table silver would jump about under Lionel's nose.

Fanchette wished me to wear my hard hat. I waved her to one side. "My soft cap and no other," I shouted, and she was dumb from surprise. I met Lionel as I descended the stairs in a whirl. He stared at me blankly. "Where are you going?" his lips framed the words, but I took them out of his mouth: "Don't ask me where I am going. I haven't decided, perhaps to perdition," and I shot out of the house.

Within an hour I was in Richmond Park tearing across the springy turf, Shrove Tuesday making manful efforts to keep up with me. "Stop," I cried at last, "your horse is winded. You wait here, I want to be alone." And leav-

## G W E N D A

ing him there, I turned along to the right guiding Elizabeth through some fine beech trees to a path amongst high-growing bracken, along which she delicately picked her way. Presently coming to a quiet spot—a little slopy piece of green turf surrounded by thorn trees—I dismounted, and fastening Elizabeth to one of the trees I wandered on a few yards further and then flung myself face downward amongst the sweet-scented bracken. How long I lay there I hardly realised. The day was windy and cool and I knew it not. There had been some rain early in the morning, but I was hardly conscious that the damp pungent bracken was wetting my face and hands. I had stumbled upon the first real trouble of my life, and I desired to be alone in some quiet place, with only the gray sky to look down upon me and my suffering. For, of course, I was suffering. I loved my husband and he refused to speak to me, and he had aroused a great soreness and anger in my heart toward him which frightened me. I could not understand his attitude. I am always ready to make friends five minutes after a quarrel with anyone, and he had been sulking with me for nearly forty-eight hours. I had expressed sorrow for having annoyed him, I

## G W E N D A

had humbled myself before him, and it is never a pleasant job kissing the dust, and he still regarded me with stony indifference. Tennyson's lines came to my mind: "Oh, we fell out, my wife and I, and kissed again with tears." And kissed again with tears! Should we ever do that? Reason told me "no." We might kiss, but not with tears. To kiss with tears is reserved only for the Elect in the Kingdom of Love. And somehow through and through me I knew that I was not of that Elect Company. Many can laugh in unison, but few can both laugh and weep.

Granty, you will say I am becoming introspective, and you warned me against it; but as I lay there dissecting fronds of the bracken, sniffing at its scent, I went through the weeks of our married life, reviewed my conduct, and examined my love to see if it had been found wanting. Do you remember one spring afternoon a few months back, as we were picking kingcups in Water Marsh, that you remarked that as soon as a human being examines and probes into and dissects and measures its love, love begins to prepare for flight. Love is a sensitive plant, and when rooted from the ground and examined under a microscope shriv-

## G W E N D A

els and dies. Love is an undefinable quality, it cannot be analysed as a chemist analyses beer or oil. "If you begin to wonder if you love or are loved enough there is something the matter. Love is a gift of the Gods, accept it as such, and don't worry." Do you remember saying that? And then you went on to say: "but if you find that a day comes when it droops a little through the strong and pitiless intimacy and trials of matrimony, water it with kindness and understanding, and if it should still droop, give it more water diluted with sympathy and a great forbearance. And if all this and other treatment fail, root it up, for it is only cumbering the ground and not worth further consideration; stamp out its feeble life, and turn your attention and affection to some object more worthy. A man or a woman who ruins his or her life in endeavouring to retain the affection of the other is a fool. Life is too short for regrets."

Water it with kindness and forbearance and sympathy and a great understanding! I jumped to my feet. Once again I would try—I would invest in the very largest watering-pot—a watering-pot of unknown dimensions—height, width, depth—Lionel should see that it was

## G W E N D A

limitless. "A watering-pot as big as the Universe," I shouted, laughter falling from my lips, and turning toward Elizabeth, I found Shrove Tuesday seated on his horse like a statue of bronze, and regarding me with respectful gravity.

"How long have you been here?" I demanded, picking bits of fern from my habit.

"Nigh on half an hour, Madame."

"But I told you to remain where you were."

"Master said I must be very careful with you and not let you out of my sight, Madame."

"Did he say that?" I know the pleasure and gratification in my voice simply shouted.

"Yes, Madame."

"Oh," I walked toward Elizabeth. "Did you happen to hear anything I said?"

"Nothin' particular, Madame."

"What was it?"

"Only something about a watering-pot as big as the universe, Madame." He looked a little ashamed of proclaiming my foolishness.

I laughed gaily. "A funny thing to say. But I happen to possess such an article, and I am going to fill it to the brim with all kinds of useful qualities mentioned in a certain Book—

## G W E N D A

to be exact, in the Beatitudes; handy useful things, such as patience and kindness and sympathy, everything but meekness. I don't like meekness, reminds you of a piece of pastry that has been flattened out by a rolling-pin."

"Yes, Miss — Madame." Shrove Tuesday coughed deferentially behind his hand.

"You can put me on Elizabeth now."

He dismounted and offered me his hand.

"And I may tell you in confidence that I am starving with hunger. I am sure it must be three o'clock."

"It has just gone one, Madame."

"Only one! Now do you know of any place within a mile of this spot where we could get lunch?"

"No, Madame."

"You are depressing, Shrove Tuesday. Do you see that small house at the end of this valley on the other side of the pond?"

"That is Ham Lodge, Madame."

"Oh, do you think we could get lunch at Ham Lodge? The name sounds hopeful," I asked.

He shook his head.

"Never did I meet a more pessimistic spirit. You should have been christened Ash Wednesday. Shrove Tuesday sounds too light hearted

## G W E N D A

on account of its association with pancakes. I am going to Ham Lodge to see what can be done. Please follow me."

Delicately and carefully the horses picked their way through the high bracken along the little path to the Lodge. To the right was a sleepy pond. Behind, in the distance, was the beautiful course of a golf links. In front of the little house lay an ancient collie. Painted in white letters on the garden wall were these words: "Teas for cyclists." At the gate was a man in uniform with sad blue eyes and a gold-laced cap.

"I see that you give teas to cyclists," I started pleasantly.

"Perhaps we do," he replied doubtfully.

"Do you think you could give lunches to horse-women?"

He shuffled inside the little gate, "I will ask my wife."

"But you must know without asking your wife," I said.

He shook his head, and seemed to think he didn't.

"Mrs. Huggins," he called gently.

"Yes, George," returned a voice, "what are you wanting now? Always worritin' round."

## G W E N D A

"It's a young lady wanting lunch."

Mrs. Huggins appeared at the doorway, a magisterial figure with a hooked nose. She shook her head firmly, she didn't give lunches.

"Oh dear," I cried, "couldn't you manage just a bit of bread and cheese?"

Another shake.

"But I am so terribly hungry, and I *do* so fancy lunch in the Park."

Marked indifference to any of my fancies.

"Well," suddenly I brightened, "early tea. Could you give me some tea with a nice fresh egg?" I was preparing to slip down from Elizabeth.

"I have a fresh egg, but I never boil my kettle before half past three in an afternoon," she returned.

"What, never?" I said, surprised.

"By which I mean, never between breakfast and tea."

"Dear me!" I observed.

"I lets the fire out in summer, and boils the potatoes on Beatrice—that's the oil stove, for dinner at half past twelve, and then boils the kettle ready for cyclists at half past three."

"But couldn't you light the stove again for once?"



G W E N D A

"No, it's against my habits."

"And wouldn't you—say, if you had to make a poultice for your husband?"

"He never wants a poultice."

"But supposing he did," I persisted.

"He's not likely to as long as he's married to me. Is you, George?"

George shuffled his feet on the gravel path a little uneasily. "It's rheumatiz as I have, Miss."

"You see," she said with triumph. "He wants no poultices; it's Elliman's Embrocation as what he wants for the rheumatics."

"And you couldn't under any consideration whatsoever, not in a case of storm or famine or sudden death, boil your kettle before half past three?" I pleaded in a coaxing voice.

"None of these things is likely to happen," she returned, regarding the heavens with the eye of a skipper.

"But famine is."

"Kingston isn't above two miles from here, neither is Richmond. You can get a grand lunch at either of them," observed this unshakable woman.

"But two miles will take us such a time to cover, and I'm literally starving," I said, mak-

## G W E N D A

ing one last effort. "And there is nothing in the whole world I desire more at this moment than a cup of tea and a boiled brown egg. I can see your fowls at the back and I know they lay brown eggs."

She shook her head. "They've never laid a brown egg in their lives, has they George? They're mostly Minorcas, and they always lay white eggs."

Then my hopes evaporated entirely, and crushed in spirit I was preparing to ride away when George himself interceded for me.

"*I could light Beatrice,*" he suggested hesitatingly, "and boil the kettle and egg for the young lady, Mrs. Huggins."

"*You could light Beatrice!*" Mrs. Huggins cast her eyes up to Heaven as though calling down a witness to the words of her spouse. "You've just found out you could light that stove when I've been persuading of you to make the effort for nigh on ten years. And you could boil an egg! You could do something besides stand at these here gates in a gold laced cap by day, and sit in your dressin' gown with the girdle and tassel in the best armchair readin' your paper of a night. Mr. Huggins you astonish me. You'll be able to procure brown eggs

## G W E N D A

next, I suppose, to gratify the young lady's fancy. I'll bid you good-day, Miss. I'm that overcome that I must go and sit down to get my breath." And Mrs. Huggins, her hands clasped across her capacious apron, sailed into the house.

For a moment I feared to meet the gaze of Mr. Huggins' sad blue eyes. How crushed he would feel, how humiliated! Supposing Lionel should ever address me in such a manner in the presence of strangers! I was wondering how I could slip half-a-crown into the hand of this outraged husband without looking at him, when I heard a chuckle, and actually found that Mr. Huggins was winking broadly. "A fine woman, my wife," he whispered as his hand closed over the money. "Good-day, Miss."

Thoughtfully, I rode out of the Park and across the Common. Reflectively I made for Kingston Market Place. It appeared there were more ways than one of managing a husband. And that Mr. Huggins admired and respected, and possibly even loved, his wife, I had not the shadow of a doubt. I felt greatly cheered. If all the Beatitudes failed, I would imitate Mrs. Huggins.

## G W E N D A

August 6th.—And I was like Mrs. Huggins for exactly five minutes, and then Lionel said he thought a little change to Silvercombe, after all, might do me good, as evidently there was something seriously the matter with me; and he would run over to Ostend for a fortnight or so, and he was sure I should be glad to miss the passage seeing I was such a wretched sailor. He said several other things as well, but I scarcely heard, I was fighting so hard to keep back the tears. So, Granty, like a little child I am dismissed and am coming home. You predicted there would be breakers ahead, and I have foundered in the first. But I am not going to squeak; do not fear that.

Ever lovingly,

GWENDA.

## LETTER X

GLENFINLAS HOUSE, THE  
TROSSACHS, Aug. 25.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Such a long long journey and I arrived at Callander last evening weary and travel-stained. Your prognostication was correct. Lionel met me and greeted me affectionately, but I felt shy and awkward, and found myself regarding him curiously during the lovely drive from Callander to Glenfinlas. But he was quite at ease. Nothing was said of our late estrangement, and he made no reference to his not having written. He had enjoyed Ostend, and hoped that I had had a pleasant time at Silvercombe. He enquired after you, and remarked that I still looked pale and seedy. His behaviour during the evening was friendly and polite. He kissed me good-night at my bedroom door and — I sobbed myself to sleep. Of course I did, and I am not ashamed of it. I am not made of the same stuff as you. I loved Lionel once, and I believe I still love him. Where did you find

## G W E N D A

your strength? In your pink shawl with your wonderful white hair and pinky cheeks you look like a gentle baby. You might be composed of satin and rose leaves. I think I alone know of your inflexible will, of your strong loves and fiercer hates, of your sense of justice, and pity of an angel.

This evening I am better. A dumb resentment and pride have come to my aid, and I am trying to remember all you advised. Out of your own suffering you have learned a greater wisdom than Solomon ever preached. And to think that I lived with you all those years and never knew, never guessed, what you had been through. You played dolls with me when I was a child, and when I grew up you walked and talked and read, and still played with me. You fought down your sorrow, and I believe you grew to be happy. As you said to me the other night, a great many of us suffer through our own faults, so why be always whining? It is ridiculous for a man or a woman to expect to be happy when they have married for love—love in the sense that means passion only. What they should strive after is the love that means friendship, as well as passion. That is the only perfect love. “Did you consider this

## G W E N D A

when you married Lionel?" you asked. "Had you any tastes in common? You love books. Does he? He loves Society and show. Do you? Are you real friends and companions?" At the time I was unable to reply to your questions, Granty. I had not been looking at the position from Lionel's point of view, and I wanted to be fair. I had been pitying myself only. I had been inclined to regard myself as a martyr. Even in my sorrow for my treatment of Lady Rivers and consequent annoyance to Lionel there was an enormous amount of sympathy for my own self-abnegation. Your questions have made me honest with myself. I think I am seeing things with a truer sense of proportion. I have come away from Silvercombe better and happier than I went to it. I feel as though I had been cleansed and invigorated by a strong wind which had blown across a wide salt ocean, or over fields of golden corn or limitless moors. I am mentally stimulated, if not bodily. I came here prepared to do almost anything, to laugh and to be merry as of old, to be an entertaining companion, to cast sentimentality to the winds, no reproaches, no repinings after what I couldn't get, just to be a sensible, practical, affectionate woman;

## G W E N D A

and Lionel's politeness, his calm indifference have hemmed me in and about and crushed me as with closing blocks of ice. What am I to do now? What course am I to adopt? Shall I, too, be indifferent and polite. I believe I could stoop to anything, play any rôle in order to win back the affection of my husband.

To-night, I am wearing a dream of a new gown. I wrote and ordered it from Town. It is white chiffon posed over cloth of silver. Even Fanchette is in ecstasies. And in my hair will be a spray of white heather. It was presented to me to-day by a dear old gillie, and I am wearing it for luck. Will it bring me any?

To-morrow I will tell you of our host and fellow guests, and of this beautiful old house and place. I *could* be so happy.

August 27.—The white heather brought me no luck. But what matters? I am fighting after philosophy; and as the poet sang: "The world is so full of a number of things." And it is very full in this lovely corner of Scotland. To begin with it contains our host, one Alexander or Sandy McAlister, a most delightful and extremely Scotch person. A bachelor, mid-



## G W E N D A

dle aged in years, but so youthful that you almost wonder at the restraint of his friends in refraining from presenting him with pop-guns and trains; and but for his great height and long flowing beard, and still longer moustachios, which droop like two cascades, I believe they would. His Scotchiness and beard are the two most pronounced features about him. He simply runs over with the former, it bursts from him at every pore; and you can see that only the natural delicacy of his feeling and kindness of his heart, prevent him from openly commiserating with you on your English ancestry, while you are conscious that he is regarding you with a sort of pity out of the tail of his eye.

You may admire his fine old house set in a very lovely bit of the Trossachs above Loch Ach-ray; you may rave about the mist curling and creeping above the corries and crags of Ben-venæ, and of the fairy dream-like scenery of Loch Katrine; but you are not of it, you are not part of it, you are not, so to speak, one with it. You are an alien in a foreign land. You are a product of an English town or sleepy English village. You were not born of the mountains and lochs, and rolling mists, and

## G W E N D A

glooming skies, and bold rocky defiles and rushing mountain torrents. You were not hushed to sleep as was Uncle Sandy McAlister by the sound of a mighty cataract—

“Whose waters their wild tumult toss  
Adown the black and craggy boss  
of that huge cliff . . . . .”

(This from “The Lady of the Lake”)

You were not cradled in the arms of Loch Achray, with its calm peace—

“The rocks, the bosky thickets sleep  
So stilly in the bosom deep.”

Once, many years ago, you and I read “The Lady of the Lake” aloud, but I had forgotten it. Why, oh why, did I not look it up, refresh my memory with its witching silvery lines before coming to visit Uncle Sandy McAlister?

I believe he was prepared to like me at first. He gave me friendly pats on the shoulder with his large hairy hand, he called me his dear niece by marriage, Mrs. Gwenda. He played a bagpipe for my edification, and one by one the other guests hid themselves in various secluded

## G W E N D A

parts of the house. All was going well till yesterday afternoon when he took me alone to Loch Katrine. We walked, and the way was heavenly: a dell of rocks and ferns, and more rocks and ferns reaching higher and higher till the road was cast into one of slumbrous gloom, cool and sweet-scented, with little threads of water gushing from the rocks. So peaceful, so restful, no motors allowed in this enchanted country, the lochs and the streams, the mountains and the mists, the rocks and ferns, the sheep and wild fowl have it all to themselves. Suddenly we emerged from the shadow to the sunshine, and Loch Katrine lay smiling before us. And it was then, through my ignorance, I missed the opportunity of twining myself round Uncle Sandy's heartstrings. It was then I should have quoted the famous lines, it was the proper place, the suitable moment. Uncle Sandy looked at me anxiously. He started the first line, he prompted, he waved his arm comprehensively around the lake to give me courage, but it was of no avail. All I could do was to sit down and weep at the beauty that lay before me, weep and laugh at one and the same moment. And then patting my shoulder, he himself declaimed the lines:

## G W E N D A

“With promontory, creek, and bay  
And islands that, empurpled bright,  
Floated amid the livelier light,  
And mountains, that like giants stand  
To sentinel enchanted land.”

But I knew he was disappointed in me. He was still kind and full of information. He showed me Ellen's Isle, and told me her story, for now he had tapped my ignorance to its depths. But, in his secret heart, I think he was debating why Lionel had married me. So two of us are now cogitating about the same matter, and perhaps even three.

When we got back a maid brought to my room a copy of “The Lady of the Lake” in a tartan cover, with her master's compliments. And before going down to dinner I mean to commit some of the opening verses to memory. I want Uncle Sandy to love me. Soon, I fear, he will begin to talk to me about Robert Bruce, and the battle of Bannockburn, and Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns, the Massacre of Glen-coe and Mary Queen of Scots. So will you send me by return of post my History of Scotland? I feel so glad I know a little about Stevenson and his works, and that his father or grandfather built lighthouses—useful thing to

## GWENDA

know that. I shall start on R. L. to-night, and carelessly touch upon his beautiful requiem: "Under a wide and starry sky . . ." and that may put me straight over "The Lady of the Lake."

Now for the guests. I have still a quarter of an hour before Fanchette comes to worry me with her endless talk of hair frames. She actually brought one here—an evil-looking thing of hair, shaped like a bolster, and when I burnt it real tears came to her eyes. I was sorry for her distress, and it appeared she would have liked it for herself, as her own was getting thin in the middle and a new one cannot be procured in the Trossachs and she is a bit *éprise* with the Boots at the hotel half a mile away. I asked her how she had become acquainted with him, and she said she had met him in a cornfield above Loch Achray. She was admiring the moon and so was he; they were quite distant, sitting against separate corncocks, when she was suddenly bitten by an awful harvest bug and set up a shrill scream as the creature was running up her sleeve, and naturally the Boots rushed across to help her to catch it, and when they had run it to earth, he still more naturally remained at her side to admire the moon with

## G W E N D A

her. "It is lonely," she added, "staring at the moon by yourself, and Monsieur le Boots is a most perfect gentleman, Madame."

So Fanchette will be contented to be here for a little while, and will cease to moan at the noise of the sheep and lambs at four o'clock in the morning.

A Mr. Colin Elder moans too at the noises of the night, of the cry of wild birds flying over the Loch. I mention him first because he is an Art Student of great earnestness and immense aspirations. Haven't you always imagined all earnest Scotch students as embryo ministers with kirks and manses ahead? I had, so this Art one came as a surprise. He is much more advanced than the Glasgow or any other school, and believes that true Art is only to be found in the North. I had but known him for five minutes when he quoted something from Lafcadio Hearn; do all Scotch people quote on every possible occasion? This is what he said:

"I do not wonder the South has produced nothing of literary art. Its beautiful realities fill the imagination to repletion. It is regret and desire and the spirit of unrest that provoketh poetry and romance. It is the North, with its mists and fogs and its gloomy sky

## G W E N D A

haunted by a fantastic and ever-changing panorama of clouds, which is the land of imagination and poetry."

And I said: "Surely that refers to writing only?" And he closed his eyes and said, "I do not agree with you. Art is always Art."

"But think of the painters of the South," I persisted, and he refused to do anything of the kind.

And when a man is very young and earnest it is always best to let him have his own way. He wears a soft unbleached linen shirt with a turned-down collar, which exposes an extremely large Adam's apple, and a Bernard Shaw tie with long ends. Uncle Sandy admires him very much, but confided to me that he was the despair of his father, a practical, rich man who builds ships.

Miss Haddo is a very lively girl, with freckles and blue eyes. I think she would be interested in Colin Elder if he hadn't the misfortune to hail from Glasgow. She herself is Edinburgh, and it appears the capital city thinks very meanly of the manufacturing one, and vice versa. Isn't it funny?

Mr. Gow is a man with a dome-like head, very bald and so bumpy that you feel you would like

## G W E N D A

to iron it out. He says "Come away now," more often than anything else, and slumbers immediately after dinner.

Mrs. Gow is interested in Scottish industries and the manufacture of Harris tweeds. She has certain weaknesses. If you so much as refer in the most casual way to the author of "The Unspeakable Scot," she swallows furiously and becomes purple in the face.

Uncle Sandy seems specially devoted and attentive to a dear old Aunt of his, who, you know, would look sweet in a mutch. As it is she wears a plaid shawl with a fringe, not so becoming as your best pink one with bobs, neither is she so pretty as you.

And this brings me up to Mr. and Mrs. Branson — Americans, with whom Uncle Sandy scraped acquaintance once at the Trossachs hotel, on overhearing them say that in their opinion Scott's monument was the finest in Europe. Uncle Sandy strolls down to the hotel once a day, immediately after the arrival of the first coaches from Callander en route for Loch Lomond. A handsome figure he cuts as he walks along the road, beard and mustaches flowing, tall, broad-shouldered, a Scot to his finger tips. How he has restrained himself



## G W E N D A

from wearing a kilt I cannot imagine. Ostensibly he goes for a chat with the dear, old proprietress, Mrs. McDonald, but really to feast his patriotic soul on the admiration expressed by the visitors for the exquisite scenery spread before them. He carelessly strolls about as they stand in groups in front of the hotel and drinks in all their expressions of praise. Later, at lunch, he retails their remarks to his guests, beaming with pride, and once when I ventured to say that he might have had a hand in the creation of his country, he replied, quite seriously, that if he had he couldn't have made a better job of it. You would like Uncle Sandy I know, Granty. His absolute simplicity, his honesty and his kindness command your love as well as your respect. I would like to kiss him. I wonder whether he would think it a liberty if I did. He holds my two hands in his two immense ones when I bid him good-night, and it would be so easy to put up my face to his if I stood on tip-toe.

The Bransons are pleasant people, not too twangy and not too tiresomely proud of the U. S. A. He has a nanny-goat beard, just like one of Winston Churchill's—the American Winston Churchill—judges. Mrs. Branson, what-

## G W E N D A

ever the weather—wears a mackintosh and rubbers. I think her mean opinion of the Scotch climate vexes Uncle Sandy, for he often refers with sympathetic pity to the heat waves and snow storms and blizzards of her country.

In this motely assemblage, I am at home and as happy as I *can* be. But Lionel is bored unutterably, I can see it in every line of his face, in his irritation, in his wide yawns at night, and I ask myself, why did he come? The shooting is middling, the fishing bad—for the season has been so dry—and the bridge worse. Could he have come to this lovely country for my sake?

August 30th.—Granty, I am lonely, lonely. I feel within me that all is over between us, and yet I am still fighting. And why do I fight? For I know that the battle is over, finished, ended, and it is foolish to fight when one is defeated.

Lionel said a few weeks back that his love for me had been a brief unconsidered passion of an hour. Perhaps it was kind to tell me this, and at any rate he was straightforward—one hour, and I must accept the fact that my hour is ended. It is hurting, deathly wounding to

## G W E N D A

my pride, but must be faced, and I keep repeating to myself:

“That moving Finger writes; And having writ;  
Moves on: nor all thy Piety nor wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line;  
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.”

Those lines so fantastic, so deeply pathetic, I say over and over again, whilst striving after the philosophy and calm resignation of the Persian poet of old. And perhaps some day I shall attain them, and let them come soon, for I am nearly broke, is the wish of your

GWENDA.

We scarcely speak to one another, or see one another; and sometimes I find myself wondering if I really *am* married.

## LETTER XI

GLENFINLAS HOUSE, THE  
TROSSACHS, Sept. 4th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Two very pleasant things have come to pass since I last wrote to you. Instantly you will conjecture: "They have made up their quarrel. They are friends once more." But no. My husband is polite to me, fairly friendly, and sometimes kind when Uncle Sandy is present, for Uncle Sandy likes me, I believe—I can now repeat thirty verses of "The Lady of the Lake," and have got up to the song: "Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er, Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking—" And our kiss is an accomplished thing. I am not sure whether Uncle Sandy or I made the first advance, I hope it was Uncle Sandy.

No, Lionel and I are as far apart as the poles. And while these miles and miles lie between us, which I, alone, am unable to bridge, I must learn to find my pleasure and peace in some other quarter.

## G W E N D A

And the first pleasant news I have to impart is that September has arrived. And you will reply, "So it has in Silvercombe. You haven't got it all to yourself." But a September in Silvercombe cannot hold a candle to a September in the Trossachs. You will have the peace, the mellow sunshine, the yellowing trees, the dewy cobwebs, the hazy mists that this fairest of the months brings; but you haven't great sweeps of purple heather on every side of you stretching away into space, purple heather splashed with the gold of the gorse, heather and gorse, gorse and heather—over which the little wild bees hum from morning till night—a carpet of such colouring, of such texture, of such fragrant sweetness that you hold your breath and tread gently for fear that many of its beauties shall escape you. You haven't the mournful blue lochs and mountains, so serene, so quiet, so majestically reposeful in the calm of these windless days. The whole a symphony of purple and gold and blue by day, and violet, and gray and silver by night. Gray when the divine mist rises and creeps along the edge of the lochs, and curls around the mountains shrouding them in a vaporous garment; violet when the night descends and with it a touch of frost which clears away

## G W E N D A

the mist, and silver when the moon climbs up into the sky and as with a magic wand touches the cornfields above Loch Achray—beloved of Fanchette and Monsieur le Boots—and the slim trunks of the little birches standing spectre-like at the end of the garden.

A fairy world, and yet so sad. So sad that I stand at my window at night, and the tears course down my cheeks as I watch the moonbeams playing hide and seek in the rushes and across Benvenue and down in the valley, and I listen to the heartbreaking cry of the snipe and wild duck and other creatures of the night. And I creep back to bed with cold feet, and sometimes that pain, I had when with you last month, visits me, a dull sickly pain, not sufficiently acute to warrant my arousing Fanchette in the next room, but sufficiently bad to render me miserable and sleepless. What can it be? I wonder, and try to put it from me as I lie and think of you and old Hannah, and Uncle Sandy, and the haunting beauty of this place. It must be that I am depressed, for I never felt beauty hurt before as it hurts here, and Mr. Peter Drexel feels it in the same way. Oh, that is my other pleasant bit of news, he and the Prendergasts are staying at the hotel. The Prender-

## G W E N D A

gasts come every year, and Uncle Sandy knows them quite well. Mr. Peter has come to fish, because he cannot keep away from Scotland, he says, once his holidays begin. He tries other places, but always returns.

I am so glad they are here. Mrs. Prendergast is charming and amusing, and Mr. Peter is so nice. I can find no other word to fit him. Just nice, with his thin clever face and humorous gray eyes. Uncle Sandy called on them soon after their arrival, and he told me that they had expressed great pleasure on hearing that I was staying at Glenfinlas.

"And did they mention Lionel?" I asked, "and say they would be glad to see *him*?" My heart beat a little quickly as I put the question, for instinctively I knew that Mr. Peter disliked, if not hated, my husband. I saw it in his eyes that night in the conservatory. I noted the look of dismay, almost of horror, which crept into his face on hearing that I was Mrs. Lionel Conyngham, and the abrupt way in which he walked out as Lionel walked in.

"They said nothing of the kind," replied Uncle Sandy a little curtly, "in fact his name was never mentioned. *You* seem to be the

## G W E N D A

prime favourite. That Drexel chap fairly hung on my words as I spoke of you."

"And did you say nice things?" A little thrill of pleasure ran through me on hearing that anybody should care sufficiently about me as to ask after me. I was beginning to feel that only *you* loved me, Granty.

"Did I say nice things?" He laughed, and gave me one of his fatherly friendly pats: "I am not going to tell you what I said Mrs. Gwenda, for fear of turning your head."

"You could never do that," I cried, "because—" I stopped abruptly. In another second he would have known all, known of my failure as a wife, known of my humiliating discovery that I could hold a man for one hour—one brief hour, and no longer.

"Well?" he queried.

"Because, because—old Hannah, Granty's old servant—" I stammered and floundered about helplessly.

"Yes?" his voice was gentle. I think he noticed my embarrassment and wanted to help me. "Old Hannah took advantage of her position as an old and valued servant and spoke plainly?" he suggested.

"That's it. She used to say horribly rude



## G W E N D A

and unkind things. She once likened me to a scarecrow that stood in a field at the back of our garden. And another time she mentioned that I resembled a clothes-prop. I certainly *was* weedy in those days. But it was not my appearance alone that excited her pity, but the worthlessness of my character. She compared me with every wicked and immoral person in the Bible. One day it was Jael, and another Ananias, and a third Lot's wife. Lot's wife more frequently than any other; and for years I was in deadly terror that I should be turned into a pillar of salt. She predicted I should be, and I believed her until I was twelve years of age."

"Poor little girl," muttered Uncle Sandy, and then taking my hand in his, and without looking at me, he said: "And now instead of old Hannah's depressing observations, you have your husband's adulation, eh? He says all the pretty things, gives you all the admiration a nice wife deserves, is it not?"

And my answer seemed a long time in coming, and when it came I think it surprised Uncle Sandy as much as it surprised me, for I said "Yes." And a recording Angel entered up the lie, and may have wept a little thereat.

## G W E N D A

September 7th.—I am having my breakfast in bed, or supposed to be having it. A piece of sole and an egg reposing on a tray look at me invitingly. The egg wears a ridiculous flannel cock's head (with an embroidered red comb and eye), presumably to keep it warm, but neither an egg hot or cold nor a piece of sole tempt my appetite. I am what is called 'not well.' Nothing the matter with me really, just poorly and tired and disinclined to get up. Disinclined to do anything but write to you, and it doesn't seem like writing, for all the time I feel you are sitting close to me, and I am just talking, talking as I used to talk in the old days, and you, with a smile on your face, listening to your little girl.

Are you tired of listening to me, Granty dear? I hope you are not, for this unburdening of my soul to you is what keeps me going. I am one of those poor creatures who cannot stand alone. If I fall and hurt myself I want somebody—Granty for choice—to help me up and rub the sore places. If I weep, I want somebody to wipe away the tears, if I laugh I want the world to laugh with me. I have no strength of character, I am not self-reliant.

Why are you tired and poorly? you will ask.

## G W E N D A

Or are you really only lazy? Perhaps a little of both. But what makes me lazy? I never used to be like this. There was a time when you tied me into a chair to keep me still. Later, you bribed me with all sorts of nice things if I would remain quiet for half an hour. You likened me to a piece of quicksilver. I couldn't stay in bed after six o'clock on lovely summer and autumn mornings. Now my heart sinks when I hear Fanchette knocking at the door. And I have had that pain again, and am beginning to get frightened. It came on last evening. The Prendergasts invited us, Lionel and me, to dine with them at their hotel. I suggested that we should walk. I don't want to miss a moment of out of doors while we are here. Soon we shall be returning to Town. Uncle Sandy invited us for a fortnight, and that is already up. Now he says we must stay another week, and I was amazed when Lionel said that we should be very pleased. "We might as well be bored here as well as anywhere else," he explained to me afterward. "Town will still be pretty empty, and the watering places abroad at this time of the year are rotten." And I am only too contented that he should will it so.

## G W E N D A

He was much against accepting the Prendergasts' invitation for last night. He doesn't like Mrs. Prendergast. He says she appears to be always making fun of a chap, and as for her beastly brother, why couldn't he stop at home raking in fees from credulous patients and fleecing people of a hundred guineas for operations that were not necessary.

"How dare you say such things? You know they are not true," I cried. "And surely Mr. Drexel deserves a holiday more than most people. He looks tired, and thin, and worn. The man is nearly worked to death, Mrs. Prendergast says, and Scotland is the only country that soothes his tired nerves and mind, and at the same time braces up his body. Don't go to-night if you prefer remaining at home. I shan't object, in fact I should like to go alone."

And he stared at me in such blank amazement that, though I was angry, I had much ado to keep from laughing.

But he went. Why I am unable to say. Certainly not to please me. Possibly from contrariness, because I said I didn't want him to go.

The evening was beautiful. A little mist

## G W E N D A

hung over the mountains and crept along the valley; a soft gray mist that did not conceal but rendered more lovely the rugged mass of Benvenue. Loch Achray gleamed palely from its encircling reeds and rushes. The only sounds that broke the stillness were the munching of the cows and sheep in the meadows, and the boom of the big flying moths, and the ever recurring cry of the water fowl.

And as we walked side by side talking common-places in indifferent non-committal voices, suddenly a great sadness overwhelmed me. My anger had gone, only a great longing swept through me that Lionel should take me in his arms as of old and hold me to his breast, that all the misunderstanding and indifference that had arisen between us should be wiped out. That he would be honest with me, and tell me through what cause had I lost his affection, and what I could do to regain it. "Lionel," I cried on a sudden impulse, "I—" then the words I had meant to say died on my lips. Reason swiftly forbade me to plead with him. "That is not the way," it whispered. "No man was ever won by tears and entreaties. They vex and irritate him. Be proud and indifferent. That is your only chance."

## G W E N D A

"Yes?" He was looking at me, waiting for me to continue.

"Oh—nothing," I stammered. "Isn't, isn't the evening lovely?"

"Not particularly. I don't like these misty nights," he returned. "But," he looked at me searchingly, "I suppose the near prospect of meeting Peter Drexel makes everything *couleur de rose*."

I turned and regarded him in surprise. "Perhaps," I said indifferently. "I like Mr. Drexel better than I like a great many people, you know."

"That is only too apparent," he said with a sneer.

"In what way?"

"In every way."

"I am glad if that is so, for when you like people I think it is nice to let them know it," I said quietly.

"It is not nice when a man is single and a woman is married. The man might expect too much."

"How dare you?" I cried furiously. "Because you are my husband, it does not give you the right to insult me."

"I am your husband, as you say, and it does

## G W E N D A

give me the right to warn you. You went fishing yesterday with Drexel from eleven in the morning till five in the evening." He hit savagely at a thistle.

"And it was the pleasantest day I have spent for months. Mr. Drexel is kind and—a gentleman. That you appear to forget. The Prendergasts, who were with us, and that you also appear to have forgotten or perhaps you did not know, are amusing and sympathetic companions, and also kind beyond words. They thought I looked ill. They were anxious to give me a pleasant day on the lake—you were shooting. I only hope they will ask me again. I—I—" I had to stop because my voice was breaking, and suddenly I went sick and ill. Stumbling to a bank I sat down, and fought against the nausea and pain which was overtaking me.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

I shook my head. "I don't know. I have had a good deal of pain lately and I don't know what it is. It will pass soon for this is not a severe attack," I replied.

"Pain?" He looked at me incredulously. "How long have you had it?"

"All through the summer very slightly, but nothing worth speaking of, more uneasiness

## G W E N D A

than anything else. But at Granty's I had a rather severe attack, and I have had two or three here. That is all." I spoke a little curtly, for I was too hurt and angry with him to wish to excite or receive his sympathy.

"It can't be anything very bad or you wouldn't be about. Women give in so quickly."

"No, it's not very bad, and I shall be ready in a minute or two to go on. And I do not agree with you that women give in quickly. I think they have wonderful powers of endurance," I said.

"Would you like to go back? And I will go on and explain," he grumbled.

"I wouldn't miss this evening for worlds," I returned. "I have looked forward to it for twenty-four hours." Perhaps I said this from maliciousness. But, as you know, I am a very human girl and I felt miserable and ill.

I was foolish to go on, but somehow I dreaded going to bed and being alone with my own bitter thoughts. I longed to be in the Prendergasts' and Mr. Peter's cheerful society, to hear their talk and gay laughter, to listen to their conversation of books and places, politics and poetry. They spoke of other things besides people, entertainments and games—what you



## G W E N D A

and I used to call "the beyond things," which are so infinitely more interesting. It may not bring one any nearer to the solving of the riddle of the universe—whence we came and where we are going—to conjecture about it, but it is a more absorbing topic of conversation than a football match, or than that Mrs. FitzSimmons has gone in for a new shade of auburn hair for the approaching Season.

So I struggled on, and, if on our arrival they noticed that I looked seedy—and I am afraid I did, for as we passed from the lounge, with its tall mirrors, to the diningroom, I caught sight of the reflection of my own white face—they said nothing. Only unkind people reflect on your appearance when you are not at your best, and women, I am afraid, are the worst offenders in this respect.

The diningroom at the Trossachs hotel alone brought me pleasure, for the windows are like stained church windows, gothic in shape, and the walls and candle shades were a soft red, and on each small table a blue campanula in a hammered silver pot, graceful and tall reared itself almost to the ceiling. Imagine the effect of about twenty blue campanulas doing this, each one seeming anxious to outstrip the other.

## G W E N D A

Old Mrs. McDonald must be an extremely clever manager.

The dinner was good and well served, but I had little appetite. All I desired was a basin of bread and milk, and, naturally, I didn't ask for it. Lionel had recovered his temper and was in good form. He looked unusually handsome, and I found my eyes resting on his face with a curious sort of satisfaction. Whatever else he may be, he is a good-looking animal, and with my sensuous love for anything that is beautiful it always gives me pleasure to watch him. I like looking at a magnificent lion, or the graceful lithe beauty of a tiger, but I don't love them. And so I like watching Lionel, and do I love him? I asked myself this question as I played with a bit of grouse, and for the first time since I knew him I could find no answer. Before I had always been able to say Yes, but last night I found it impossible. And so I may be nearer to happiness than I imagine. If you don't love a man, you don't care tuppence about his indifference to you. There is that satisfaction.

I turned from him to Mr. Peter and unconsciously fell to watching the latter. What a contrast were the two men. The one—hand-

## G W E N D A

some, animal; the other — plain, intellectual. Mr. Peter has no good features but his kindly humourous eyes; his mouth is wide, his nose long, his hair nondescript in colour, but he has a strong, good, clever face and an arresting personality.

Granty, it gives me great satisfaction when I reflect how much more sensible and clear-headed you are than any other woman in the world. A fool woman would say that I was falling in love with Mr. Peter Drexel, and a man without much understanding of a woman's character would probably say likewise. But you do not say and imagine absurd improbabilities. You know that it is only a few months since I gave my love and myself, every bit of me—body and soul—to another man's keeping. And because he doesn't want me now, has no further use for me, I am in no mood to offer myself to anybody else. Before I could contemplate such an eventuality, my wounds would have to be quite healed, the soreness gone from my spirit, and I quite ready to start afresh.

Fanchette is here. Will I get up, or will I not? she asks. The hour is late. Soon lunch will be ready, and Mr. McAlister keeps asking

## G W E N D A

for me. Yes, I will get up if Fanchette gives a faithful promise that she will not try to make me wear a new pair of corsets which might have been fashioned from unbendable or unbreakable bamboo—not iron, because that has been known to bend under pressure. Nor a new gown, nor new slippers, nor a new way of doing my hair, nor new anything, because I want to be old to-day, old and comfortable in loose garments and no figure. With few hair-pins in my head, and no bones anywhere but my own. Would it be possible to wear a tea-gown? Yes, Fanchette assures me. Everybody out to lunch but Mr. McAlister and the old lady with the shawl, and neither of them can see properly.

“Not see?” I said in surprise.

And Fanchette explained that as they both must be nearly sixty she didn’t imagine that they could see very well.

Still September 7th.—I am alone in my bedroom. Fanchette has brushed my hair and fixed me up for the night and gone to bed. A bright little fire burns on the hearth, for these nights are chilly and damp. I hold my feet, which are like ice, to the glowing warmth, and

## G W E N D A

my head, which is like fire, I lean against the cold marble of the mantelpiece.

Downstairs, away in the library, Lionel, in a softly shaded light, is making love to Lady Rivers. She is in white, and is looking exceptionally lovely.

Fanchette made me some cocoa before she left me and it is gently simmering on the hob. Only my bodily discomfort seems to affect me to-night. I feel much keener at this moment on a cup of cocoa than on Lionel. In fact, if I had to make my choice between the two, I should certainly choose the cocoa. It may be that mentally you can only suffer up to a certain point, then the body begins to assert itself.

You see how simple was the answer to my question: What made Lionel come to Glenfinlas? To humiliate me. Once in fight I worsted him. Afterward I said I was sorry, but he apparently never forgives. And the cold vengeance of this man, who is my husband, frightens me.

It happened this way: We were having tea in the hall when Lady Rivers arrived. The Prendergasts and Mr. Peter were with us. The hall was cosy with lamplight and firelight. Everybody was laughing and chatting, and

## G W E N D A

Uncle Sandy unusually entertaining. Lionel was seated near to me on an old settle, and suddenly he took my hand. I cannot describe to you my sensations at this simple action. It was so unexpected. The colour rushed to my face, and my heart began to beat in a mad tumult of doubt and pleasure, but chiefly doubt. It was an accident I told myself, he was unconscious of what he was doing; but, no, he looked into my eyes and pressed my hand. There could be no mistake. And then like a silly fool, I gave myself up to the pleasure of the moment. All my anger, and hurt pride, and bitterness, vanished in a flash. He had come back to me, he still loved me. Everything was forgiven and forgotten. My hand was in his, that was sufficient. In my idiotic delight I smiled across the room at Mrs. Prendergast. Everybody must have witnessed my pleasure and pride, but I cared not. Lionel, my husband, had returned to me, and—while I was still smiling like an easily pleased infant, the walls of my new-found joy tumbled about my ears with a crash, leaving me sick from the shock as Lady Rivers walked smilingly into the room.

The absolute refinement and subtilty of my husband's revenge almost calls forth my ad-

## G W E N D A

miration. It was so cunningly planned, the anti-climax so complete. Only a master-hand at cruelty could have evolved it.

Poor Uncle Sandy, dear simple Uncle Sandy, and stupid unsuspecting Gwenda! She was wondering in her last letter to you how her husband could support the dulness and loneliness of such an isolated quiet place as Glenfinlas. She even suggested the possibility of its being done for her sake! She had almost forgotten the existence of such a person as Lady Rivers. It never entered into her wildest calculations that such a person might descend upon Glenfinlas, and that kind Uncle Sandy should be duped into sending her a pressing invitation to visit him. If Lady Rivers was a friend of Nephew Lionel and Mrs. Gwenda, and was stranded with nowhere to go—house in town in the decorator's hands, visit to country house to her dearest friends upset at the last hour owing to a visitation of measles to her dearest friend's children—why, *of course*, she must come to Glenfinlas. The house was large, some of the guests were leaving, beauty in distress always touched his kindly old heart. And certainly it should be kept a secret from Mrs. Gwenda if Lionel wished it. It *would* be a

## G W E N D A

pleasant surprise to her when she was so poorly and tired, etc., etc.

And the surprise was so great, the shock of it, that in the first moment my senses reeled and I feared I should break down, and then—somehow, Granty, I pulled myself together, strength came to me, and I rose to the occasion. How I did it I shall never know. Lionel's eyes were upon me. Lady Rivers stood in front of me—a daintily gloved hand was held out to mine, Uncle Sandy was looking at me happily triumphant, I was conscious that the Prendergasts and Mr. Peter were watching me curiously, and then I spoke calmly and with great clearness, and without a break in my voice: "Uncle Sandy will you introduce me to this—lady? I don't know her in Town, but here—she is your guest."

And while he murmured our names, amazement and stupefaction written on every line of his dear face, I met her eyes fearlessly, unflinchingly, a little smile on my lips, a gracious condescension in my bearing. Then motioning her to a seat at my side, and with a pleasant look at Lionel, I hoped she had had a comfortable journey and had enjoyed the drive from Callander, and how she must be longing for



## G W E N D A

some tea. And as I spoke it seemed to me that the tension of the room relaxed. *Mr. Peter*, who had been standing, sat down. *Mrs. Prendergast* helped herself to a piece of scone, and Uncle Sandy, forgetting to introduce her to his other guests, took a very long drink of tea. Only Lionel sat immovable. The blank astonishment of his countenance, as I had spoken, had given way to one of gloom and anger. His carefully arranged little game, his plan of attack, had received a check. It was his turn to make the next move for my complete humiliation and undoing. Should I be able to say checkmate?

Dear one, am I cruel to write to you thus? Are you fretting for me, shedding tears for me, thinking of me through the long hours of the night? Because don't. I am not weeping. My heart feels like a stone. I hardly care. Tonight I am hating Lionel, so that is better. When you have arrived at hating a person you have loved, you are on the fair road to recovery. It gives me no pain to think at this moment of those two in the library. If Lady Rivers is clasped in my husband's arms I would not be in her place. Would not have her fair foul body, and still fouler mind. She is beautiful,

## G W E N D A

and I am not. Her hair is warm red gold, and mine is the same old brown. Her skin is dazzlingly fair and her eyes bright, mine are dull with suffering—not suffering of the mind, but of the body. We think nothing can be worse than the pain of our souls till our bodies begin to hurt, then we tell another story. Write to me soon Granty. Send me one of your cheerful, wise, practical letters. Say no bad things of Lionel for that will be no help to me. I can say them myself, think them myself. But tell me what I am to do in the future. What work I shall take up, how I shall learn to support myself. I shall leave Lionel as soon as we return to Town. That, of course, you will understand without my telling you. You know my views on the subject. To me it is the most degrading thing in life for a woman to continue to live with a man, to be kept by a man, when he has ceased to love her—only love makes matrimony holy— And there is only one excuse for a woman when she remains in such a position, one excuse only, and that is if there are any children. For the children she will make any sacrifice, face any misery and humility that may be put upon her. For the children she will find strength to live her life. But

## G W E N D A

where there are no children and she still remains simply to be "kept," when she bows her head to a daily portion of insults and hard words, when she cannot find the strength to face the laughter or jeers and pity of her friends for her unsuccess and dismal failure as a wife—for the world always blames the woman—then, I say, she has sunk to great depths of degradation.

I should leave Lionel now, go back to London to-morrow, but for bringing sorrow to Uncle Sandy. I don't want him to know of the failure of our marriage before I can help it. It will grieve him beyond words, and that I should take such a step in his house would prove me lacking in all consideration, not to mention affection for him.

Will you think I am giving in too soon? Say that I should have tried a little longer. That I have no patience and courage, that I am a feeble knock-kneed creature?

Granty, I would have tried till the breath left my body, my patience should never have been exhausted, had I felt that there was the slightest chance or one ray of hope for me. But I know there isn't—not the very slightest. For days, weeks, I have been watching, studying my

## G W E N D A

husband, searching for the weak places in the armour of his cold indifference, but have found none. Other husbands have their little moments of tenderness—I have detected them in them. Mr. Branson spoke irritably the other day to his wife, a few minutes later he put a footstool to her feet, and laid his hand for a second on her shoulder. She smiled and thanked him, and I caught the look of understanding between them, and they have been married for twenty years. Mr. Prendergast, much as he adores his wife, growled because she had forgotten to see that his fly book had been packed. She expressed great penitence for her carelessness, scolded herself for her forgetfulness, suggested sending a wire for it at once, and still he growled. Later on it was found at the bottom of a trunk, but long before that I had seen him fetching her her salts as she was suffering from a headache, and fussing round her like an old hen. My eyes are blinded with tears as I speak of these things. I think if Lionel had shown me just a little kindness and attention, just loved me ever so little, I would have bartered my soul in the next life for him. He could have stormed at me till he was black in the face one minute, if he would have kissed

## G W E N D A

me the next. I would have always forgiven. We women know it is only men's little way when they storm, and we are always ready to forgive. But now it is too late. I neither want my husband's love nor his kisses. I should feel polluted were he to offer them to me. All I desire is to get away from him. To hide in some hole, to pass out of his life for ever and ever.

All my love, from your own sorrowful

GWENDA.

## LETTER XII

GLENFINLAS HOUSE, THE  
TROSSACHS, Sept. 14th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

For the first time in my life I have been in the fashion!

Empire curls running all over your head like "Maud's," you conjecture.

Wrong. My hair at this moment is in two pigtails, and not very tidy at that.

A Directoire frock, in which you can only stand, not sit?

Still wrong.

A hat so large that you have always to remove it before getting into a cab?

What do you take me for?

You are learning to dance a cotillion?

Granty, I am nearly always in pain.

You have begun to smoke Egyptian cigarettes and drink brandies and sodas?

I might like to, but shouldn't be allowed.

You are not quick or clever this time mine Great Aunt. I thought you would have guessed

## G W E N D A

at once. I am just recovering from a sharp attack of appendicitis. Royalty, nor the smartest of the smart set could go one better. And this is the explanation of all the pain and nausea which had become so constant of late.

And I have enjoyed it. I don't mean the pain, but the being tucked away in bed where I could hide my hurt from the curious eyes of the world. Where I could just lie with my own eyes shut, no need to speak or smile or be agreeable, or play a part which in its difficulty had become almost hellish—the rôle of not caring—not caring that your husband and another woman were making love to each other in front of your very eyes. Of smiling upon them when you could hardly suppress the cry of anguish which rose to your lips, of sympathising with them and almost assisting them in their assignments. Of being sisterly in your bearing toward the woman, and motherly in your gentle kindness toward the man.

Granty, it was so difficult that I was near to breaking down a score of times, but God or the devil helped me; and always I remembered the words of your last letter: "Belinda Ann never let them know her suffering. Her pride to her was as a coat of mail to a warrior. It helped

## G W E N D A

her to smile upon them when one less armed would have wept. The lovers looked at each other in surprise. 'Either this woman is a fool or she doesn't care,' they said. And in their secret hearts they thought it was the last, and somehow the savour went out of their love-making, and they felt small and childish in the presence of Belinda Ann. And she, though deeply wretched, hugged one small consolation to her heart, she had preserved her dignity and her pride. She had never pleaded with them, never puled or whined, and in the end she arrived at peace."

And in the end she arrived at peace! Those words were prophetic, and they have come true in one sense of their meaning, for I have had the peace of a sick room these last few days, the gentle dropping of the cinders on the hearth, the subdued voices of attendants and nurse, and the hush of their walk as they cross the room to open a window. And, in addition, I have been surrounded with all the loving care of three people, and you will guess their names: Uncle Sandy, Mrs. Prendergast and Mr. Peter Drexel. Was your Belinda Ann as fortunate?

Matters came to a crisis, or I should say my illness did, when I was out one day with Uncle



## G W E N D A

Sandy in the dogcart. He had driven me along the banks of Loch Vennachar—such a glorious drive. I felt ill when we started, but he was so wishful that I should go—I had declaimed five more verses of “The Lady of the Lake” the previous evening, and this drive, I knew, was meant as a sort of reward—that I could not find it in my heart to say No. All went well at first, then gradually the horrid pain began to attack me—dully at the beginning, and I was able to enthuse with Uncle Sandy about the loveliness spread before us; the light on the yellow leaves of the birch trees, and the loch which lay like a sapphire gem in an amethyst setting of heather.

But, presently, it became so severe that I was obliged to tell him.

“Ill!” he cried pulling up the horse so abruptly that I was nearly shot out of the cart. “My darling, why ever didn’t you say so before? What is the matter?”

“I don’t know,” I said, smiling at his consternation. “I—am in great pain. It’s nothing—I mean nothing serious, but it hurts a lot. Oh!” I checked a groan, “If you drive quickly, I shall be able to hold out.”

And Uncle Sandy did drive quickly. We

## G W E N D A

should have been run in if we had been seen by a policeman. We simply swept along the roads—perplexity and distress written on every line of his dear face.

“It’s all right,” I whispered, as we just grazed a corner. “I’ve had it before. I’m not going to die.”

“Had it before? Does Lionel know?” he asked.

I nodded.

He knit his brows and swore beneath his breath.

“And he has not made you see a doctor?”

“We are so far away from one out here.”

“There is Drexel.”

“Lionel thought it might be indigestion.”

“And he had no right to think it was indigestion,” shouted Uncle Sandy. “What does he know about indigestion? He knows as much about it, I expect, as I know of sleeping sickness—damned idiot! Oh, my dear, you are not going to faint. I’ve no brandy—don’t faint. One minute longer, Gwenda, one minute—we’re nearly there.”

“Y-es,” I said, and as we tore up the drive to the front door I lost consciousness.

And Mr. Peter has attended me, and he and

## G W E N D A

Mrs. Prendergast and Uncle Sandy have helped to nurse me, looked after me, sat with me, read to me, talked to me. Heaped flowers upon my table, and told me funny stories. Done everything in their power to liven my days and make me forget that downstairs, or out on the moors, Lionel has been making love to Lady Rivers, or Lady Rivers making love to Lionel, it doesn't matter which. And almost have they succeeded in their efforts, so contented and happy have I been with these three friends. I have listened with amused pleasure to Mrs. Prendergast's quaint and witty conversation. I have laughed at Uncle Sandy and his Scotch sayings—few of which I have understood, but to look at Uncle Sandy is to laugh when you are in the mood; and I have talked to Mr. Peter—what about I am unable to say, but he has seemed to like to listen to me, and when I have been too tired to say another word, he suddenly recollects he is my medical adviser, and not only scolds himself but scolds me, which I tell him is mean.

This attack has given way to treatment—and I don't wonder! The toughest appendicitis would surely yield to such boiling poultices and fomentations and hot stoops. I feel like a scalded rabbit. Mr. Peter says he has rarely

## G W E N D A

seen anyone so tiresome about taking medicine, and while I am struggling with a dose he piously tells me of all the patients he has seen in hospital and out, swallowing disagreeable draughts as I should swallow strawberries and cream. And that if I don't get well soon of this, or ever have another attack so severe, nothing but an operation lies before me.

He has just come into the room and caught me writing. Professional disapproval has settled upon his countenance like a cloak, and I have smiled at him ingratiatingly.

"It's only to Granty," I plead.

"Put it away," sternly.

"May I just add that I am much better and there is no cause for anxiety, that sounds so nice and medical?"

"Put it away."

"May I tell her that she is not to rush from Devonshire to Glenfinlas like a streak of lightning, as really there is no need? For I am so much better that I feel I could write——"

"Put it away." He shouted this time, I regret to say. So I must put it.

Good-bye for the present,

Your loving

GWENDA.

## LETTER XIII

GLENFINLAS HOUSE, THE  
TROSSACHS, Sept. 18th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Lionel has gone. He left last evening in a white heat of passion—not with me, but with Uncle Sandy, and if I write very quickly I may be able to tell you all before Mr. Peter catches me. I feel so frightfully well to-day that it cannot do any harm. I am supposed to be sleeping now—they order me to sleep each afternoon from three to four, then they—Mrs. Prendergast, Uncle Sandy, and Mr. Peter—come and have tea with me, so I have a whole hour to myself.

Uncle Sandy came to me last evening about six o'clock, and asked me if I felt equal to having a little chat.

"Indeed, yes," I replied. "I love chatting with you, and I want to hear more about Roderick Dhu."

"Not to-day," he said, though a pleased look came to his face, "I want to talk about some-

## G W E N D A

thing else—I—I want to ask you a question—”  
He sat down in front of the fire and curled one long leg around the other.

“Well?” I said.

“Oh, do you like Lady Rivers?” he asked abruptly.

“Not at all,” I replied.

“I understood from Lionel that she was a great friend of yours.”

I moved my pillow uneasily. It is difficult to tell a person that your husband is a liar.

“It was a mistake,” I said, “she is not a friend of mine.”

“And it wasn’t a pleasant surprise to you when she came, not the pleasant surprise I had hoped for?”

“It was a very disagreeable shock.”

“Ah,” he uncurled his legs. “Gwenda, I—I want to ask you something that you may deem an impertinence, and—and I don’t want to offend or hurt you, but—” he knit his brow, and walking to the window stared out into the gathering darkness.

“I will tell you anything you want to know, Uncle Sandy,” I said softly, “and I am sure you couldn’t be impertinent if you tried.”

“Thank you, my dear,” he said, “that is kind

## G W E N D A

of you. It's about Lionel. He doesn't come much to see you. Is there anything wrong? Is all well between you and your husband?"

"The night before I was taken ill," I said slowly, "I saw Lady Rivers in Lionel's arms. They did not see me."

He started violently. Then coming to the side of my bed, he knelt and took my hand in his.

"Do you want to know any more?" I asked.

"Only this. Lionel loved you once—when he married you."

I shook my head. "He thought he did, and so I thought, but I find he is incapable of it. He thinks now that he loves Lady Rivers, but he doesn't. He wanted to revenge himself upon me when he induced you to ask her here. And she amuses him, and she is very beautiful, and so he imagines that he has a beautiful affection for her. But it is not so. The first time she crosses him in anything he has set his heart upon, she will go to the wall too. Sometimes, Uncle Sandy, I think Lionel isn't quite a normal person, that there is some kink in his brain which has dwarfed his moral sense. He is cruel. Haven't you noticed it?"

Uncle Sandy bowed his head.

## G W E N D A

"I watched him fish a week or two ago. I watched him kill the fish he caught, it was not done humanely, and as one poor little chap jumped about the boat in its agony, I saw him smile. I turned on him in a fury, 'You can smile,' I shouted, 'at witnessing the death struggle of a poor little creature that has done you no harm.' And even Lady Rivers had the decency to call him a brute."

"And that woman, does she love your husband?"

I laughed at the simplicity of his question.

"Does she look as though she loved him? If she did, I could find it in my heart to be sorry for her. Love when it is disinterested is always worthy of admiration, but she is only vain—vain and selfish to the heart's core. It flatters her vanity to see another woman's husband at her feet, it pleases her senses, it gives her a feeling of satisfaction to see him kneeling there, and it gratifies her when she reflects upon the suffering of that other woman. Love each other, Uncle Sandy! They are only playing at it, or else I am very much mistaken."

Perhaps I spoke bitterly, though I tried hard to make my voice careless, but Uncle Sandy rose without a word and quietly left the room.



## G W E N D A

An hour later I heard a carriage drive away, and a little while after he came into the room.

"I have cleared that woman off," he said briefly. His usual ruddy face was pale and his hands shook from emotion.

"Lady Rivers?"

"Yes, Lady Rivers. She was in the library with Lionel. I opened the door suddenly. Her head wasn't actually on his shoulder, but pretty near it. Then I let fly. I hardly know what I said, but it was pretty bad—not much varnish about it. I told her what I thought of her. 'Such women as you,' I thundered, 'vain, selfish, cruel—yes, cruel—for while you are indulging in your flirtations, another woman is in deathly pain, are worse than the women on the streets. They are princesses by you. There is a certain amount of loyalty and fairness to each other among them. They do not deliberately set out to win a man who is already bespoken. While, as for you, I can find no word to fit you. For a week I have been watching you. You thought I was a blind old fool, but I saw a lot, and it made me sick. And I also saw a woman's face blanched from suffering—more mental than physical. I saw the brave stand she made, I watched her laugh, and listened to her talk

## G W E N D A

and she was game to the last. Neither of you, neither you nor Lionel is fit to black her boots. And now go. Leave my house. No, not both of you. Lady Rivers to-night, please; my carriage shall be round in an hour, and Lionel to-morrow. You shall not leave my house together.' And I watched her crawl from the room. I am afraid I forgot myself and said too much, but I hate the woman."

I sat up in bed. I was unable to speak. And Uncle Sandy put his arm around me and stroked my cheek. "Poor little girl," he said. "No, don't cry. There is nothing to cry about now—I shall have that Drexel chap after me. She's gone. I saw her drive away, and I didn't throw rice after her—you bet."

I laughed and cried together till he became alarmed.

"I'm going for Drexel," he announced.

"Don't," I cried. "I'm better." I mastered myself with a great effort. "I won't cry again. And Lionel?"

"I said little to him for your sake. He leaves in the morning."

And, Granty, aren't we women extraordinary, illogical creatures? for suddenly I felt sorry for Lionel. I felt I would like to comfort and

## G W E N D A

belabour him with blows at one and the same moment. I felt like a woman who is in the witness box at a police court: "Yes, your worship, he did give me a black eye, but he's my husband and he can do what he likes with me, and I bring no charge against him, your worship. It's people who *will* interfere. But don't do nothing to him. *I'll* talk to him when I gets him home."

But I did not say this to Uncle Sandy. He is a man and would not have understood.

Later, I sent a little note to Lionel by Fanchette. I said: "Will you come to see me to-night for a few minutes? I want to say something to you. No reproaches about the past. I think it is foolish of people, when they are young, to think of the past, when they have a future—which may be full of good things. Gwenda."

But he did not come.

Your sorrowful

GWENDA.

## LETTER XIV

GLENFINLAS HOUSE, THE  
TROSSACHS, Sept. 21st.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

So you want me to come home. Come back and take up my old life at Silvercombe—the dear life that was so full of happiness. You want me to feed the chicks, collect the eggs, clean the lamps, golf with Mary, walk, sew, read aloud to you, watch the sunset, go to Exeter on market days, play écarté with a certain dear lady when evening falls and the lamps are lit, do all the thousand and one things I used to love doing, and—Granty, I can't.

Now that I am tired and poorly it all sounds deliciously restful, but how am I to forget the ache of my heart in a life so peaceful and uneventful? I should have so much time for thought and retrospection. You would make things too easy for me, too rounded off, and I want to hustle, hustle like an American pork packer. So—I am going to work.

## G W E N D A

I can see you lift your pretty hands in dismay. I can hear what you say: "You propose joining the ranks of unqualified, underpaid, underfed, anæmic women who work for their livings? And what particular colourless species of drab are you going to be: Nursery governess, clerk, typist, companion, or housekeeper?" Your voice is full of scorn, and it behooves me to be firm when you are in such a mood. So I reply, "I haven't yet made up my mind what I shall do, but it will be work, not playing at it; downright hard work—your-fingers-to-the-bone sort of work. Work that keeps your mind and body on the run by day, and sends you to dreamless sleep at night."

Granty, I must howl for a bit *to myself*. I cannot help it. Later, I shall howl at intervals. After a while I shan't howl at all. I have seen a widow prostrate for the first three months of her widowhood, playing bridge at the end of six, attending theatres and race meetings at the end of twelve, remarried at the end of eighteen. Above everything else I try not to cheat myself. Human nature has enormous recuperative powers, thank God. My nature is very little different from other people's natures. There are degrees of sorrow as there are de-

## G W E N D A

grees of joy, but ultimately most of us arrive at moderate happiness if we have fair health and enough to eat and drink. Some of us arrive at that happiness quicker than others. The widow was quick, perhaps I shall be slow. But sooner or later my howling will be finished and then I will come home, and we will have some more good times together. You will say if I arrive at nothing else that philosophy has come to my aid. Doesn't sorrow always bring a certain amount of philosophy in its train? You have often told me that this is so. In one's first wild grief, it is difficult to believe that the sun will ever shine again. You see that it is shining upon others who have suffered, but their suffering has never been as acute as your own. They may have lost beloved children, a sister, a mother, a brother, but there are things that are worse than death you say to yourself, believing that this is the truth. But, later, you know that there is *nothing* worse than death. Nothing in the world. There is a remoteness about a dead person you have loved, a silence, which are stunning. You might pick a man's pocket, Granty, you might go to prison, but when you came out I should still have you to love, to hold in my arms, to touch. So I

## G W E N D A

try to tell myself that I have not suffered the greatest sorrow that is possible, and that the sun may shine again some day, even for me.

And when it does begin to shine I shall rush straight off to Silvercombe, and we'll enjoy it together. In the meantime, as soon as I get quite strong, I'm going to hustle round and earn my own bread. Again you become insistent and say "What at?" And that's just what I am trying to decide. A few months back, before I crossed to St. Malo, I should have said, a stewardess on board a big liner: Something very breezy about such a life, plenty of variety among the passengers, great satisfaction in seeing people with bright green faces when your own is rosy with health. Now, I know that mine would be greener than most, so being a stewardess is off. The position of hall porter in a big cheerful hotel, or clerk in a police court are barred to me by my sex disability, also that of an engine driver. There are few jobs open to women that I fancy. I wouldn't object to being a charwoman, as I would char for several families and so get plenty of change, but doubt my strength for scrubbing. Charwomen seem to do nothing else

## G W E N D A

but scrub, and if they stopped, wouldn't be charwomen. One thing I won't be and that is a companion. The bare thought of holding such a position nearly makes me cry. Can you imagine anyone less well equipped for companionship than I, unless it's yourself? By which I don't mean to be rude, but you and I have not the first and most necessary qualification of brightness. Everybody wants *bright* companions. Do you recollect how you and I used to detest bright people — bright-from-a-sense-of-duty people. Born brightness one can tolerate, but not acquired brightness. Miss Swallow, who used to live along Heathy Bank, would have made a lovely companion to anybody desiring a sort of cheerful red Christmas robin hopping about them. It would be as easy for me to be a coal-heaver as a Christmas robin. So if you can think of any kind of work more suited to me than companionships or charships, let me know in your next letter.

I am sitting up in my bedroom to-day. A pleasant comfortable room, with a rosy carpet and rose-coloured walls, along the frieze of which plump shepherdesses walk. I feel quite well again, just a bit tired and an inclination



## G W E N D A

to sit with my hands before me and stare into the fire if Uncle Sandy and Mrs. Prendergast and her brother would allow me. But they won't for long. First one comes and chats with me, and another comes and makes *me* chat (that is generally Mr. Peter), and a third comes and reads aloud, or plays poker patience with me. There are now just the four of us left. Mr. Prendergast has been obliged to return to business, and, one by one, the other guests have departed. Uncle Sandy insisted, as soon as there were two vacant rooms, that Mrs. Prendergast and Mr. Peter should leave the hotel and take up their quarters here.

Neither of them, in the very remotest way, has made any reference to Lionel's leaving. They must know of the trouble between us, of our estrangement, of his attitude toward Lady Rivers, but not by word or look have they offered me any sympathy but for my illness; and I am grateful to them for their tact, for their delicate consideration, for their innate courtesy. A kind-hearted ill-bred woman would have let me know she pitied me. Mrs. Prendergast is kind-hearted and well-bred. Only Uncle Sandy speaks of him sometimes. He asked me

## G W E N D A

to-day if I had heard from him since he left, and when I shook my head, he swore again beneath his breath.

"I don't understand it, Gwenda," he said a little piteously, "and he is my nephew."

"You can't help it," I replied, unable to suppress a smile. "You are not responsible for the behaviour of any nephew."

"But I never suspected he was like this. I imagined he was a decent chap, kind-hearted, straight, at any rate a gentleman."

"So did I," I said.

"He looks one."

"Yes, his appearance is very attractive."

"Say something horrid about him," he groaned. "Your silence, your self-restraint, your white face, frighten me. Just curse him to me, let yourself go. You'll feel tons better if you will."

"But I don't want to. It will do no good. I've drawn a blank, so has he. We must just make the best of it. There are thousands of happy marriages, indeed I believe the majority of marriages are happy. That ours is a failure is rough luck on us both. We both think it is the other's fault, it is human nature to lay the blame on anybody but ourselves. I think it is

## G W E N D A

Lionel's fault, he thinks it is mine. I think him selfish, cold, cruel. He thinks me dull, superior, fanatical and old-fashioned because I refuse to receive immoral women at my house, or laugh at coarse vulgar stories. I have been unable to retain his affection, if I ever had it. My love for him is *nearly* dead. It has been bruised, trampled upon, spurned in the dust, but because it was so alive once, I have made many overtures of friendship and reconciliation, all of which have been rebuffed. I have humbled myself before him, and my better judgment, or rather Granty, told me that this was a mistake, and yet I did it because of my love for him." My voice broke a little, and Uncle Sandy poked the fire furiously.

"Yes?" he said after a time. "Does it hurt you to tell me?"

I shook my head. "Not much now, my pride has gone. It always hurts a woman's pride for the world to know that she has lost the affection of her husband. It is like admitting her failure to hold him. But, now, even that has gone. I have become indifferent to what the world thinks, and my own particular world is so very small: Granty, you, the Prendergasts, Mr. Drexel, one or two old friends at Silvercombe.

## G W E N D A

They will not despise me because I have proved unattractive to my husband."

"Despise you! Don't you think they will marvel at his lack of taste?"

"I don't know," I sighed. "I am not really attractive to men in general, in fact I think a great many men dislike me. I don't say pleasant things to them. Only a few weeks ago I was really rude to a man who took me in to dinner, the sort of person I label a club man. I have them all arranged in neat little parcels in my mind. There are club men and games men, business men, and loafers, serious men with a purpose written large over their earnest countenances, and literary men, artist men and music men, professional men and scientific men, public affairs men and sportsmen, domestic men and racing men. The games men are the most boring, the loafers are the most amusing, the professional men interest me most because they rarely talk of themselves, and the club men I dislike the most. This particular club man was well preserved, had black hair carefully brushed over the thin places, a blue clean-shaved face, a monocle, and took an intense and really intelligent interest in his dinner, which was a particularly good one. He examined the

## G W E N D A

menu with care and forgot that I existed. His first glass of champagne apparently warmed him, for raising his eyes from his plate he took a rapid survey of the assembled guests, the second glass apparently caused him to feel cordial, for he laughed at a joke perpetrated by a man across the table, the third made him expansive, and with the desire to expand to somebody he suddenly realised I was there at his side, and a woman too. He was well fed, he was comfortable, good wine ran through his veins, he smiled and bent confidently toward me. And it was then I spoke, amiably and smilingly: 'I am not ready yet. You have had three glasses of champagne and I have not finished one. You enjoyed the entrée, and I didn't. You have taken all the courses and I have skipped one. You are feeling comfortable inside and I am not. I shall be an uninteresting, irritable companion as yet if you talk to me, so please wait till I have arrived at the same stage as you. And don't tell me I am a pretty woman, because it's open to discussion.' And, of course, the man sat open-mouthed, a piece of lamb cutlet poised on his fork, and he naturally thought me either a lunatic or the rudest girl he had ever met. So you can see, Uncle

## G W E N D A

Sandy, that there are many men who must dislike me horribly."

He sat back and roared. "Yes, certainly, if you talk to them in that way. But I have never seen you in such a mood. You always speak to me nicely."

"Could I do anything else?" I replied, stroking his sleeve. "You have been so good to me, so kind. I have trespassed upon your hospitality so greatly. You invited me for a fortnight, and I have been here for nearly a month, and Mr. Drexel forbids me to travel for another four days."

"I shall miss you when you have gone. This house is large, and I am a lonely old man," he sighed.

"Will you have me again some day?" I asked. "It will be such a lovely, restful holiday in prospect when my work becomes too arduous. When I feel I must fly from my charring or my shopkeeping, or my duties as lady's maid."

"What do you mean?"

"I am going to leave Lionel, and I'm going to work."

"You're going to leave Lionel?" he cried in astonishment.

## G W E N D A

"Yes," I said.

"Leave him for good. Not live in his house," he was greatly distressed.

"Uncle Sandy," I said gently. "Did you think I could remain with Lionel when he has ceased to care for me? What object is gained when two people live together if they don't care for each other? When they irritate one another, get on each other's nerves, render each other's lives miserable. If I had a child I would remain for its sake, but for no other reason in the world."

He looked into the fire deeply troubled.

"But perhaps with patience——"

"Never," I interrupted. "Not if I possessed the patience of an angel and fifty Jobs rolled in one would Lionel ever care for me again. We have been married for less than six months, and it feels like sixty years. Neither do I want him to love me again. Before he left the other evening I gave him one more chance, I wrote him a little note. I asked him to come to me. And he didn't. That is sufficient. I shall go back to Prince's Gate for a night in order to tell him that I am leaving. I think this is only fair to him—and to collect my belongings, then I shall pass out of his life."

## G W E N D A

"And you will return to Silvercombe?"

"Perhaps later. But now I shall work, work is the only panacea for trouble, don't you think?"

"I wonder what you will work at." His voice was slightly sarcastic. "Looking at the space you occupy in that armchair, I should calculate roughly that your fighting weight is below eight stone, and you are a fairly tall girl, Gwenda."

"Thin people are invariably more active than stout people. Besides it's unfair to mention my appearance just now when I have been shut up in this room for some days. I have been boiled and roasted, and when you boil or roast meat its weight is reduced. I thought you would know this. I want fresh air. Uncle Sandy, will you take me for a drive to-morrow along some wide high moor? Not through a valley shut in by the mountains, but in a place where there are curlews and strong sunshine and fresh sweet winds. Just you and I alone. And we won't talk to one another, because you and I are such good friends that we can afford to indulge in silences, and so few people can do that."

And he said that he would. I would like you



## G W E N D A

to know Uncle Sandy, because you must have met so few really nice men, Granty.

September 23rd.—To-morrow we return to London: Mrs. Prendergast, Mr. Peter and I. They pretend that they have not extended their visit for my sake, that they are not travelling to-morrow in order to look after me, that they are not sorry for me, and this last little deceit I appreciate the most. I don't want them to be sorry for me. We can only tolerate pity from a chosen few.

Do they imagine that I don't see through them? I hope so. I would not spoil their little game. I would not have Mrs. Prendergast know that I know she is only pretending when she assumes that I have heard from Lionel. She rattles on and gives me no chance to speak. She still holds forth on the correct management of husbands, and is always delightful on the subject. This is what she said to-day:

“Humour them in all the little things that don't really matter. If they want the blinds up when the sun is pouring into the room, let them have them up, and presently you, yourself, go and sit on the cool verandah. If they want

## G W E N D A

to put their feet on your best couch let them, because a couch is so easily re-covered. If they want to go to sleep immediately after dinner, let them, because if they stayed awake they would probably be cross. Let them have their way about nineteen unimportant matters, it will make them feel they are masters of your destiny; they will stand with their backs to the fire, thumbs in waistcoats, swaying backward and forward on their heels, feeling very fine fellows. But when the twentieth and really important matter comes along, you see that you're away on top, before your husband finds out it is important, because men are not quick. If you are keen on moving to number 19 round the corner because of its good bathroom, have the vans at the door before he has had time to consider whether he wants a good bathroom or not. When he opens his mouth to speak, be ready with some really good grilled kidneys to put into it, and mention carelessly that Mr. Jones, his superior at the office, was after the house, and congratulate yourself on having a husband of such prompt action. He, himself, will help the men to move the inlaid cabinets, and tell his friends that he has just done a smart bit of business."

## G W E N D A

"What you really mean is," I laughed, "that to manage men you must gull them?"

"Don't use such an expression," she said, pretending to look shocked. "I hate women who stoop to deceit. Men are so really reasonable that you have only to understand their little ways——"

"In order to get your own," I interrupted.

"Yes, if you like to put it that way. Just in the same way a shrewish woman can always retain the affection of her husband."

"Oh," I said, speaking carelessly, and altering the position of my cushion, "That is a subject that always interests me. Do tell me how it is done. I sit at your feet." We still keep up the pretence that my marriage is a happy one.

"It is the easiest thing in the world. The woman must run, and the man must chase her. She must never stop running and must never allow herself to be caught."

"That is an old wheeze," I smiled. "And I should have thought you were too clever to have perpetrated it."

She looked at me in surprise.

"Have you ever thought what is going to happen when the woman is too old to run and

## G W E N D A

the man no strength to chase her? Books, plays, people seem to forget that husbands and wives are much longer middle-aged, and even old, than they are young. Middle-aged husbands and wives, when they have lost their wind, don't want to go chasing each other about like a couple of rabbits. Surely they want a love that has been built upon a stabler foundation than that of allurements and desire? They want the love that means understanding, sympathy and good companionship. Imagine a man of, say, fifty, returning from his work tired, worried and hungry, and finding a wife of the same age, decked out in all her finery, coquettish, capricious, and wanting to be chased for a kiss. The man would swear, or bang the door if he were a properly constituted normal man of fifty. What he wanted was a welcome, a look of sympathy for his fatigue, an armchair pushed before the fire, the mere comfort of her gracious, serene presence. A man of twenty-five might be ready at the end of a day's work to make ardent love to his wife and chase her round the room, but not a man of fifty. It seems so hard to me that the people who are responsible for such alliances as 'women must run and men must chase them' refuse to reckon

## G W E N D A

with the enormous number of middle-aged husbands and wives who don't want to run, but want to be unromantically happy together."

Mrs. Prendergast sat down and stared at me.

"Of course, *you're* young enough and beautiful enough to go on running and Mr. Prendergast is very active," I said apologetically.

"My dear, you are quite right," she said. "'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, etc.' I never thought of it in that light before. I am ten years older than you, and I am a fool. From this day I set about building my house of love on a good solid foundation of reasonable, work-a-day affection. You should have been a happy wife and mother, Gwenda." And then, I think because she saw I was near to tears at her words, she went quietly out of the room.

The evening of September 23rd.—Your letter arrived an hour ago. There is only one delivery of letters a day here, but sometimes Uncle Sandy sends a man to Callander in the evening on an errand and he calls at the post office, and so to-night I have had your killing epistle. And, oh Granty, how I have laughed over it.

## G W E N D A

I have laughed so much that already I feel a pound heavier. And what pleases me is the knowledge that I *can* still laugh. That it has not all dried up. My recuperative powers, you see, are already beginning to be active.

And oh, you are funny! I *have* had appendicitis. Flatly I contradict you. In spite of all you say, of the terrible mistakes of doctors that have come beneath your notice, I *have* had appendicitis. I don't want to have had it, I am not in the least proud of having had it, I never mean to have it again if I can possibly help it, I shall eschew the seeds of raisins and grapes and raspberries and strawberries as I try to eschew the temptations of the devil, and I certainly *won't* have an operation if I can, by any power of my own, prevent it.

I was playing écarté with Mr. Peter in the library when your letter was handed to me, and as I have no peace till I have devoured every word of your quaint interesting epistles, I laid down my hand and asked for his forbearance for a moment while I read it. And the next thing, and I hope you won't be angry with me, I was reading it out to him. It was too good a thing to be missed. The bit he liked best and made me re-read several times was this—I

## G W E N D A

quote from your own words: "This Mr. Drexel may be a nice kind man, anxious to do his best, but don't forget he is a doctor of medicine, and doctors of medicine, especially when they are surgeons, make more mistakes than any other creatures on this troublous globe. Doctors of science make a power of trouble with their investigations and discoveries and prognostications which never come true, but they can't come near doctors of medicine in the havoc they work in the minds and bodies of credulous people.

"I knew a man, a farmer, who was ill, and the doctors gave him up. He was getting cold, what you call in a moribund condition, and they stepped gently from the room and said they could do no more.

" 'Now it's my turn,' said the wife. And she got eight big, empty vinegar bottles and filled them with boiling water, and three of these she laid against each of his sides and legs, and the other two she put against his feet. Then she poured some hot rum and milk down his throat, and though he couldn't speak his eyes said he liked it, and he signalled for more, and she kept filling up the bottles with boiling water, and pouring down the rum and milk, till his eyes

## G W E N D A

shut in a beautiful sleep. And that man is living now."

I remember him, Granty. It was Jacob Winterbottom. And I am of opinion that the Angel of Death might beckon to him with little result so long as anyone was about who would continue to pour rum and milk down his throat. Jacob will have to die a sudden death.

Then you go on to say: "There was my old friend Susan Taylor. She had been married for some years when she fancied she had got a tumour. Most of her friends had got tumours, and she had been left behind in the running, and she was an ambitious woman. 'Yes' her medical man assured her, he had grave fears that she was right. She must see a first-class specialist, and he wrote things on cards, and bowed her out of the room. The specialist was very awe-inspiring, and his frock coat was very long. For every extra inch on a specialist's frock coat the patient pays an extra guinea, I have noticed. His fee was £3.3., and he also wrote things on cards. He said an operation must be performed within a month. The tumour was a large fibroid one, but not malignant, he would write to her doctor, and he bowed her out of the room.



## G W E N D A

"Now, my friend Susan Taylor was of an impatient disposition. She didn't want to wait a month for her operation, the spring-cleaning was finished and she had nothing to do. So she went to see another specialist. She didn't consult her doctor about this one. She did it off her own bat. His diagnosis was not a bit like the man's with the long coat. He was of opinion she was suffering from dropsy. My friend was, naturally, greatly perplexed. Dropsy was not nearly so exciting as an operation. She went home and told her husband, and he, being a shrewd man, whispered something in her ear. And it greatly annoyed my friend Susan Taylor, and she went to bed in great dudgeon. Within a week she was delivered of a fine male child, and for the first time in his life, her husband had the laugh against her, and they had been married for twenty years."

Do you know, I thought Mr. Peter would have died with laughter at this story, and I am not a bit sure if I ought to have read it to him. Where do you get hold of such yarns?

Your last about the man who was operated on for appendicitis when he was suffering from acute pneumonia, is the only one, Mr. Peter says, that could contain the slightest foundation

## G W E N D A

of truth. It would be possible, but not probable.

Set your mind at rest, dear heart, only dire necessity would ever send me to the operating table. I have as great a horror of such a contingency as you. I am not like your friend Susan Taylor who was hard up for something to do. Besides, I am so much better, and with care I may escape ever having another attack.

When I folded away your letter, Mr. Peter remarked what an exceptionally nice old lady you must be. And, of course, I said you were, and straightway, forgetting all about our game, I fell to telling him of your sayings and doings. I must have talked for half an hour before I realised what I was doing, and when, a little shamefacedly, I pulled myself up, he said: "I knew some beautiful old lady must have brought you up, beautiful in mind as well as in body. Tell me some more, if you are not tired."

Wasn't it nice of him? My cheeks burnt with pride and pleasure, and I am so glad, so happy, so proud that, through my own poor weak medium, I am able to transfuse a tiny bit of your reflected glory. Perhaps I am not expressing myself clearly; what I mean to say is, that I am so glad somebody thinks I am a credit

## G W E N D A

to you and your training however infinitesimal that credit may be, and not a disgrace. In the old days whenever I was depressed and down, felt wicked or meanhearted, I would go to look for you. You might be in the garden or the box room, the hen run or the greenhouse, but wherever you were I searched for you till I found you.

“What is it?” you would ask. “What do you want, Gwenda?” And I would make some idle excuse as to the whereabouts of the store cupboard key, or the note book in which we kept the record of the eggs that were laid, but I never told you I had only come to look at you. And as I looked and found comfort, I knew what the angels felt when they had been in the presence of God.

Granty, I thank you for just being what you are, and I inscribe myself always and for ever,

Your loving and deeply grateful

GWENDA.

## LETTER XV

PRINCE'S GATE, LONDON, S. W.,  
Sept. 24th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Just this brief line to tell you of my safe arrival.

I am tired, but the journey has been a long one.

I was received by Balbriggan, Hillingbran, Mrs. Perkins, about four other servants, Shandy, who has grown enormously stout and tried to bite Fanchette; and a big pile of letters and cards awaited me, but no Lionel. A tempting little supper was laid in the dining-room for *one*. Bread, potatoes, sauce, salsify were handed to me alternately by Balbriggan and Hillingbran. I choked into my cream *à la mode*, and then told them they could leave the room. I waved savouries and cheese to one side in spite of their expostulations, and ordered them to place the dessert on the table.

When they retired I burst into—laughter, not

## G W E N D A

tears. I was imagining the contrast of things. To-night I sat in state waited upon by two gorgeous creatures who only breathed a little more noiselessly than they trod. To-morrow I should be in a furnished apartment, probably eating sausages and mashed potatoes which may be rash after my illness, but I love them so, and you can't with dignity eat sausages and mashed in a house in Prince's Gate. I shall be waited upon by a gaspy girl with impossible hands, like the servant in "Merely Mary Ann," and funeral cards mounted in black, and dead ancestors will gaze at me from the flowery walls. The coals will be cheap and dirty, and the lamp will smell. Shells and china dogs will ornament the mantelpiece, which will be of mottled marble, and birds in glass cases will litter the tables, also wool mats and tortoiseshell tea caddies.

But do you know, I believe I shall almost touch the edge of happiness, for I shall be independent, and the strain will have been removed—the strain of wondering what I can do next to please Lionel, put him in a good temper, make him happy; the strain of trying to appear fair in his eyes, of wearing uncomfortable, long, clinging frocks with wispy trains over which

## G W E N D A

I always was tripping, and hats which made my head split with their weight.

I am not taking any of my clothes for which Lionel has paid. I have told Fanchette to unearth my dear blue serge coat and skirt, which jointly possess three pockets. There are compensations for everything in life, I shall lose a husband and gain a pocket.

I also told Fanchette to have my things packed for going away by eleven o'clock to-morrow.

"You are going away again, Madame?" she asked in astonishment. "Madame will excuse me, I know, but I hoped for one day in London to buy a few things that are greatly necessary to me. Also I want to buy a tie, a beautiful one of purple and green in the Burlington Arcade for—" she blushed a little, "for—Madame will guess perhaps——"

"For Monsieur le Boots?" I queried softly.

"Yes, Madame, you have guessed. Purple is his colour, I think."

"Yes, I should say it was, he has a nice clear skin if I remember rightly."

"A beautiful skin, Madame, so fair." She clasped her hands.

"And you are betrothed, Fanchette?"

## G W E N D A

"Nearly, Madame, Monsieur le Boots gave me a brooch, it has forget-me-nots on it." She blushed again.

"And you are giving him a Burlington Arcade tie—they are expensive."

"Yes, Madame. To the footman at Mrs. Prendergast's I gave only a sixpence ha'penny tie from Hope Brothers." She smoothed down her apron reminiscently, and sighed.

"And a tie from the Burlington Arcade means business?" I asked.

"Yes, Madame."

"Well, Fanchette, you will have plenty of time for your shopping. You are not going with me, and—I hope you will be very happy with Monsieur le Boots," I said.

"Not going with you, Madame," she cried. "You go alone, and you have been ill."

"I am better now."

"But who will dress Madame's hair?" She was genuinely distressed.

"I shall dress it myself, and I don't want to hurt you, Fanchette, but I am looking forward to the prospect," I laughed. "Now, go and pack my things. Three plain frocks, the under-linen I had in my trousseau, no evening gowns as you disposed of my beloved green spangled

## G W E N D A

net and my wedding dress which *wasn't* Directoire. One trunk, remember, and my old hat box."

"But—" Her mouth opened wide, and I went quickly out of the room.

So I have made all my arrangements. I have searched the *Daily Telegraph*, and jotted down the addresses of several advertised apartments, to which I shall drive to-morrow. I have £15 of my own money, how thankful I am that my father left me that tiny bit in Consols. £30 a year is better than nothing. Then I begin my search for work. How I shall go about it, I haven't the faintest idea at the moment, but inspiration may come.

Granty, how good you are to me, and how wise. You don't press me to return to Silvercombe yet. You know that I will come when I am ready. You know that my wounds are raw and bleeding, and that when they are healed the first person I shall look for will be you. And you see how confident I am that you will be waiting for me, ready with a welcome, a smile on your lips, and hand in hand we shall walk through the door of Sunset, and, in spite of its name, there will be sunshine in the house and still more sunshine out of doors. Happi-



## G W E N D A

ness I shall have refound. For it's happiness I go in search of to-morrow. There is so much of it knocking about the world, the pessimists may say what they will to the contrary. It is to be heard in the song of the birds and the bees, the sea and the corn, in the whisper of the wind in the grass and the laugh of a child. It is to be found in the light on the land, and the twinkle of the stars by night, why even the moon seems to be laughing, and the sun whenever it appears is always smiling, as we know. There is so much happiness everywhere that surely there is a little left for me. Anyway, I am going in search of it. Wish me good luck.

Good-night, Granty dear,

Your loving

GWENDA.

It is half past nine and Lionel has not yet come in. I am very tired and feel far from well. How shall I find strength to tell him of my purpose. Perhaps it would be wiser after all to slip away quietly in the morning, and then write and tell him I have gone away for good. It would save us a pitiful scene perhaps, and some bitter words. And I want to leave with dignity, and without anger.

## G W E N D A

I hear his footsteps and my heart is beating suffocatingly.

Hillingbran is waiting to take this to the post. I will write in a few days and give you my address. Take care of your cold, naughty woman.

## LETTER XVI

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 8th.

MY POOR DARLING:

So you are ill. And you have been wondering, wondering, worrying yourself to death about my silence.

Oh, my dear, how I want to come to you; and I can't. For I, too, have been ill, and over one hundred and fifty miles lie between us.

Just think if you were in the next little bed to mine—a dear, white-haired, beautiful lady instead of a tousle-headed fat woman, who calls upon God in a most peremptory and intimate fashion to help her in her pain.

I have ten minutes in which to write, so must hurry; and forgive the scrawl, for I am lying flat on my back with the notepaper close up to my chin, which is not conducive to good penmanship.

You will guess what has happened from the address above. Yes, it's all over. Appendix gone—good riddance to bad rubbish—and I'm

## G W E N D A

making a pretty good recovery. Temperature a bit worrying, but wound healing nicely. Will be able to venture on a sneeze in a day or two, if sneezing attacks me, without fear of rupturing stitches. Never wanted to sneeze so much in my life just because I can't.

Granty, I wouldn't let them tell you—Mrs. Prendergast, Mr. Peter, Fanchette, I knew would worry so; and you had a heavy cold when you last wrote. So, Fanchette, obedient to my instructions, just sent you the post cards saying I was too busy to write, which was perfectly true for I *have* been busy.

Forgive the deceit, won't you? I had so little time to think, to plan. In ten days I shall be discharged from here. Then I shall take the first train down to Silvercombe, and I shall creep into bed beside you, and together we will get strong and well.

The nurse is bearing down upon me, and she is so plain and inflexible to duty.

One word more. *Take care of yourself.* Bronchitis is not a thing to be played with. Be good, and do as the doctor tells you. You think you know more than he, but you don't. You are a conceited old lady! Ten days, Granty mine. Oh, how I love you. GWENDA.

## G W E N D A

Tell Hannah *never* to forget the friar's balsam when she uses the steam kettle. It gave you great relief before. And tell her to send me a wire in the morning reporting how you are.

## LETTER XVII

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 9th.

MY DEAR GRANTY :

I have been washed and my hair brushed and combed, and this morning I have been allowed to plait it myself, showing how I am getting on. I always told you my recuperative powers were nothing short of marvellous.

The nurse says I may spend a whole hour in writing to you to-day, or rather, I should say, the Sister of the Ward, who is much more sensible than the others, and I suppose that is how she got to be a Sister. Sense always tells in the long run, and counts much more than brilliancy, doesn't it? But I am wasting time, and I have so much to say. I simply can't wait till I get down to Silvercombe. I am to write half an hour this morning, and the other half this afternoon.

By this time you will have received my letter telling you that I've been led to the slaughter,

## G W E N D A

and you will be wondering how I got here—to a woman's hospital, and I cannot tell you just yet, because if I did I know I should cry. I cry so ridiculously often these days—the least thing sets me off, and I suppose it's because I am still a bit weak. But don't think because I cry, I am unhappy. For I am not—always. Sometimes I smile as much as I weep—can't laugh yet—because a laugh, though I don't suppose you know it, comes through your abdominal muscles. Such lots of things you do, come from there: sneezing, coughing, sighing, clearing your throat, even some sorts of talking, and at first you have to whisper, which is very awkward, as the majority of the nurses appear to be slightly deaf, or they *won't* hear.

I was talking about smiling, wasn't I? And there are so many things to smile about in hospital you can hardly get them all in. There is the young house surgeon, for instance, who comes into the ward at certain hours of the day, tapping his teeth with a pencil, feeling your pulse, examining your tongue, and pretending he thoroughly understands your case from top to bottom, from beginning to end, and would have you believe that he knows as much about

## G W E N D A

your inside at the moment as your out. Of course, you know he doesn't, he hasn't the slightest idea as to why half an hour before you had been in such pain; but you don't let him know you are aware of this, and that he is experimenting on you, learning from you, and gaining experience from your every symptom of pain and uneasiness, or he might get annoyed.

You would be rude to him, Granty. But I like the boy. He is young and very ignorant, but he must gain his experience somehow or other. And I possess the comforting knowledge that if anything went wrong with my case, he has only to go to the telephone and summon the surgeon or assistant surgeon to his aid.

"Half time," the nurse says, and I must stop. Besides the great, the important, the most eventful moment of the day has arrived: the surgeon—the head surgeon—is expected. My sheet must be smoothed, my pillow straightened, a crumb must be dusted from the bed, I must compose my hands at my sides, my nails must be clean. Over the ward a solemn stillness reigns. The tousle-headed woman begins to whimper. She feels sick, she flings back the clothes. A scandalised nurse flies to her side.



## G W E N D A

She mustn't be sick *now*, not till the great man has been, it is most inconsiderate of her. She brushes a wisp of hair away from the hot forehead, she lays an eau-de-Cologne handkerchief on her pillow, she bids her close her eyes and be good. She removes a bit of fluff from the hearthrug, and, for the third time, sweeps the bars of the grate. I catch her regarding me with a troubled expression. Perhaps I am looking mutinous. I close my eyes, and she heaves a sigh of relief. Her two patients are going to do her credit. They may be squirming with pain like worms on a pin, but they look *nice*; and again she sighs with relief.

4.30 P.M.—Hannah's telegram has come, and I *am* glad you are better. Dear one, *do* be careful. I am such a good patient—though the nurses won't allow it—they would only allow it if you were blind, deaf, dumb, and paralysed, and lay in their hands like a senseless cocoon—and you are such a bad one. I read between the lines of Hannah's telegram: "Doing as well as can be expected." That means that you are pouring your medicine away when Hannah is not looking, refusing to take your food properly, and insisting upon having all the windows

## G W E N D A

open though you are down with bronchitis. *Do* be sensible for my sake. I am so worried about you, and I am sure worry is not good for anyone who has just lost an appendix.

The stout lady in the other bed wants to talk. She wants to talk more than any man or woman I have ever met, and she always wants to talk about the same thing—operations.

She has had three, and her pride about them is astonishing.

Why are some women so proud of having undergone operations? She dilates on every symptom, every pain, every complication, every phase of all her illnesses and all her operations throughout her life. She might have arranged them all herself. She also gives me intimate details of the births of her three children.

I vexed her last evening. I was just dropping off into a doze when she said: "If ever I have another operation, Mrs. Conyngham, I——"

"You never will," I interrupted quickly, before she could get any further.

"How do you know?" she asked a little snappily.

"Because there can be nothing left to be operated upon. From what you have told me all

## G W E N D A

your organs must be gone." And her mouth was still a trifle open as I dropped asleep.

My half hour isn't up, but I am tired, so tired I can scarcely move my pencil along the paper. The least thing seems to fatigue me.

Love from

GWENDA.

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## LETTER XVIII

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 10th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Your letter was brought to me with my breakfast—no it wasn't now I come to think of it, for I breakfast so early that nothing but the milk could possibly arrive at such an ungodly hour. The blinds go up with a clatter—great heavy venetian ones—at six o'clock, and you are recalled from your first dreamless sleep following a long, long night of wakefulness, by a large cup of tea and a plate of stodgy bread and butter being pushed beneath your nose.

So your letter didn't come with my breakfast, but an hour or two later, and on reading it I lay and laughed and cried in such an idiotic fashion that the nurse on duty said she should take it away from me unless I at once became quiet.

Fancying I detected just a suspicion of sympathy in her voice, I couldn't see her face for she was down on the floor scrattling like an old hen in search of dust, I said: "Nurse, are *you*

## G W E N D A

the fortunate possessor of a Great Aunt who has lovely hair like crinkly snow, and a pink shawl with bobs, and a black silk apron with an elastic and jet button?"

She raised herself from her kneeling position, and sitting on the back of her feet she regarded me carefully for a moment, then she shook her head.

"I am not crying now," I said, mopping away at my tears, "and you haven't got such a Great Aunt?"

"No," she replied.

"I am sorry for you," I said.

"You needn't be," she returned with a laugh. "I hate relations."

"You hate relations?" I lay and considered this. When you have had an appendix removed, the simplest proposition takes earnest thought.

"So do I," said the stout lady from the other bed.

"How very unfortunate," I observed musingly. I had become tired of the conversation, and feared the lady might start on her relations as she had done on her operations.

"There was Bob Williamson, my first cousin—" she began.

## G W E N D A

"Skip Bob Williamson," the words were out before I knew I had said them. Wasn't it awful, Granty? I lay and trembled.

The stout lady was deeply offended. She gave a little snort, and when people snort, as you are aware, I become simply abject.

"I am frightfully sorry," I said. "I never meant to say that. Please forgive me, but I—I have a letter I was particularly anxious to read again."

"We listened to your tale about the old lady with the bobs," she said reproachfully.

"I know you did. It was simply horrid of me. Perhaps you will tell me about your cousin Bob Williamson when I have finished my letter?"

"I will see," she said loftily, and I thanked her in anticipation. Then I settled down as comfortably as it is possible when you are swathed in bandages like a trussed fowl and read your letter over again, all but the sympathetic bits. Those I can't manage yet. Granty, you mustn't make me weep. The nurses get cross when I do, and they are quite right. Weeping takes it out of you, and I want to get strong as fast as ever I can.

So you were suspicious all along? I might

## G W E N D A

have known it. You didn't believe what Fanchette said on her post cards: that all was well with me, and that I was too busy to write. You couldn't understand why Fanchette was messing about me at all. That my last letter informed you I was about to settle down in the midst of funeral cards, and stuffed birds, wool mats, and tea caddies, dirty coal, and gaspy maid servants, sausages and mashed, flowery walls and ancestors; and a lady's maid in such a setting would be absolutely incongruous.

I might have guessed that you wouldn't be deceived. But I couldn't guess that you would be so utterly foolish as to rise from your bed, announce to Hannah that you were going in search of Miss Gwenda—how I like the old appellation—get dressed, order your trunk to be packed, walk downstairs, and faint at the garden gate.

And your rudeness to old Hannah and the doctor appears to have been terrible, and you have the credit of being gentle and sweet! What a fraud you are. I, alone, know of the depths of your depravity.

I must pause. A nurse has dashed into the room, a subdued murmur like wind in forest trees is to be heard, a murmur of breathless

## G W E N D A

anxious nurses. The surgeon, Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth, is approaching. Two nurses fall upon my counterpane and straighten it out, another with a comb goes for the stout lady's hair. I will write some more later. The great man is at the door . . .

The great man is usually attended on his daily round of the wards by the House Surgeon, who refrains from tapping his teeth with a pencil on these occasions, the Matron, the Sister of your own particular ward, and two or three other nurses. They body-guard him into the room, and then fall into attentive attitudes and hang on his words. And quite right that they should; he is a busy man, his time is precious, he cannot repeat his instructions more than once, yet this scene always makes me want to laugh. They all look so solemn and important. If, after attending to a patient, it is necessary for him to wash his hands, one nurse pours the water into the basin, another hands him the soap, and a third holds the towel in readiness:—

“A nice little boy held a golden ewer  
Embossed and filled with water, as pure  
As any that flows between Rheims and Namur,  
Which a nice little boy  
Stood ready to catch



## G W E N D A

In a fine golden hand-basin made to match.  
Two nice little boys rather more grown  
Carried lavender water and eau-de-Cologne.  
And a nice little boy had a nice cake of soap,  
Worthy of washing the hands of the Pope.  
One little boy more a napkin bore  
Of the best white diaper fringed with pink . . .”

I was softly repeating these lines to myself while Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth was interviewing Mrs. Philpots, the stout lady, when he turned suddenly and said “Eh, what’s that?” And, of course, I was covered with confusion.

“Did you speak?” he demanded, and I replied that I was only saying some poetry to myself.

“Poetry! what about? And why do you repeat poetry now?”

“I don’t know,” I said, very frightened.

He turned to the matron and the nurses. “Does this patient often recite?” And unexpectedly I saw a twinkle in his eye. They all shook their heads and denied knowledge of my having been guilty of such a thing before.

“H’m,” he said. “She must be getting on very rapidly.”

“I am,” I returned glibly.

“Are you well enough to repeat what you were saying to yourself just now?”

## G W E N D A

"Oh, no," I cried, going scarlet. "I—I simply couldn't."

"Why not?"

The eyes of all were upon me, the matron's cold, the house surgeon's amused, the nurses' alarmed. The great man was bandying words with me; for a moment he had stopped being great, and his eyes were human and twinkling.

"It would be a strain on my abdominal muscles," I said; and he laughed outright.

"H'm. Will you tell me this—Were your lines from 'The Jackdaw of Rheims' ? It is one of the few poems I happen to know, and I thought I caught a familiar line."

I nodded.

"And what made you repeat it now?"

I lay and wriggled, unable to answer.

"It was apropos of something?"

"Perhaps."

"I thought so. But let me give you a piece of advice: Don't always repeat your poetry out loud. The next man may not have a sense of humour. Good-bye, young lady." And he went out of the room followed by his astonished satellites, leaving me so small and crushed that I felt no bigger than a threepenny bit.

Your loving

GWENDA.

## LETTER XIX

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 11th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

To-day I feel strong enough to tell you of how I left my husband and my home, and the manner in which I arrived here.

You, too, are stronger—thanks to old Hannah's careful nursing. Before I felt it would be cruel to give you a recital of my woes and suffering, for I knew that you would lie and suffer too. Impotent to assist me, you would chafe and fret at your weakness and helplessness.

So I have tried to write to you cheerfully. No, I haven't tried, for I have felt cheerful since my body stopped hurting and aching, since the grinding horrible pain left me, since the nausea stopped, and the intolerable thirst departed.

It is all behind me now, all the misery of the last few months, and I live simply in the present, live from hour to hour, from moment to moment.

## G W E N D A

Presently Fanchette, Mrs. Prendergast and Mr. Peter will be coming to see me. I have that to look forward to, and their visit will bring me great pleasure. On two afternoons a week we are allowed to see our friends for three whole hours, and eagerly we look forward to Wednesday; and that passed, we as eagerly look forward to Sunday.

Mrs. Philpots receives Mr. Philpots, a melancholy looking man with a black beard, and some little Philpots. A screen is placed between our beds so that we may each have our party in privacy. Mrs. Philpots' party must sit in semi-darkness, as her bed is the farther side from the window, so with a tall black screen in between there cannot be much light. Perhaps it is just as well, for I feel sure Mrs. Philpots cannot look her best in bed or Mr. Philpots would not have married her.

I do not pretend that I look nice, but I imagine, and hope, that I look nicer than Mrs. Philpots. Our hair is tied into two plaits so that the backs of our heads may rest comfortably on our pillows. Mine makes plaits of respectable length, and are tied with pink ribbons. Fanchette insisted upon this, as she believes that pink is a becoming bedroom colour, and I

## G W E N D A

have a pink bedjacket, and a pink ribbon tickles my throat. I only wear the last when I am expecting a visit from Fanchette. Mrs. Philpots' hair is sandy and thin, and her plaits remind me of two radishes. She also wears pink ribbons, and, as you are aware, pink does not tone with sandy hair. Fanchette, in an audible whisper—because, though you can't see over the top of the screen you can hear through it—wonders why she doesn't wear green or blue ribbons. She caught sight of Mrs. Philpots sideways as she entered the room.

Fanchette will arrive first to-day. Oh, she *has* been good to me. I had not the faintest conception that she cared for me any more than she cared for her new chignon which has just come into fashion. But she has a heart of gold, and is as faithful as the hound Gelert.

I must go back to that last evening at Prince's Gate, and it seems so long ago that I begin to wonder if it belonged to another life. That for one brief spell I was transmigrated from a beautiful state at Silvercombe to one of misery, and am now returning to my old existence.

You will recollect that as I was ending my letter to you that night, Lionel came into the room.

## G W E N D A

He was in evening dress, and looked handsome and well. He neither greeted nor offered to kiss me, for which I was grateful to him. I might have been seated there for a week. He remarked that the night was cold, and he shouldn't be surprised if there was a frost and would I like a fire.

I told him no as I was going to bed and had only waited up to speak to him.

"I hope you're not going to make a scene," he said with eyebrows raised in horror, "because if you are, I am going out again. I have been dining with Lady Rivers, and only returned because I thought you might feel neglected."

I shook my head and laughed, laughed at the stupidity of his words. Did he think he could hurt me now?

"You are not clever," I said gravely. "A clever man would not have said that. It was so obvious."

His face became dark with anger. "Did you return home to tell me that?" he cried.

"No," I replied slowly, for my heart was beating painfully. "I returned home in order to leave it. To tell you that I was going away for good. I thought it only fair and courteous

## G W E N D A

to inform you of this. I am your wife and I must endeavour to be considerate to you till I cease to be your wife, and there were my things to collect and pack."

"You are talking like a tragedy queen, my dear," he sneered.

"No, I am not. If you reflect upon it, tragedy queens indulge in heroics. They rave and weep and plead and hurl reproaches about. I am doing none of these things. I am simply stating a plain fact. I am going away. I cannot live with you. Whether you could continue to live with me I do not take into consideration. I simply know that I cannot live with you and be happy. I am young and wish for happiness, it is the birthright of each of us, therefore I go to seek it. We made a mistake, we must undo it, it is possible."

I walked toward the door, but he stood in front of me barring the way.

"You cannot divorce me," he hissed. "There is no proof."

Again I laughed at his own condemnation. He was certainly not clever.

"Don't you want to be divorced?" I asked. "I hadn't thought about it. I was going away because we were not happy together, for no

## G W E N D A

other reason. I accused you of nothing." I looked at him steadily. "Neither do I accuse you of anything but indifference to me; not of cruelty, nor unfaithfulness, nor drunkenness. A man seems to be under the impression that it must be for one of these only that a woman leaves him, but it is not so. There are her pride and her own indifference to be reckoned with. Yes, her own indifference. A woman finds it hideously difficult to live with a man she has ceased to love. Her life at home is everything to her—when that becomes unhappy there is nothing left for her but to start all over again."

"And you have ceased to love me? I am curious, that is all."

"What do you think?" I laughed at the question. "Should I be going away if I had the slightest affection for you? You might hate me, but if I still loved you ever so little I should remain and hope on, hope to win you back again. We women are built that way, we are mostly very faithful in our affections, it is no credit to us, it is a scheme of nature for the protection of the children. But I don't care for you. I loved you once greatly, but you have killed it slowly and surely till it is as dead as a stone."



## G W E N D A

"In what way? again I am curious." He offered me a chair.

"In what way?" My voice rose, "In every way. By your indifference——"

"Excuse me," he interrupted, "does a woman expect to be loved and petted and kissed from morning till night?"

"She expects a little affection from her husband—at any rate during the first few months of her married life. Her new life is so strange to her. She has probably been taken from a home where she has received much tenderness and consideration from her parents. She misses her mother, or the one who has stood to her for mother. She feels a little lonely, everything is new to her. It is then she turns to her husband, and usually finds the sympathy and protection she needs. But I—" My voice broke, and for some moments I battled with my tears. I was tired, desperately tired, after my journey, and slowly but inexorably the old pain was coming back. At first I hardly realised what this meant. I forgot Mr. Drexel's warning that the next time it meant an operation. I only desired to make Lionel understand before I left him for ever.

"Well?" he said.

## G W E N D A

"Ah!" I cried, "you know. You understand, though you won't admit it. You found me dull, and you let me see it. You found me dowdy, and again you let me see it. Perhaps I was sensitive—I was not well, but there is a way of telling unpleasant truths to people we love that prevents their feeling the hurt of it; you did not find this way. I told you I was sorry for my treatment of your—friend. It was difficult, but I cared for you. You refused to be friends. You allowed me for nights to eat out my heart in the silence of my own room. You packed me off to Silvercombe alone. Then came the crowning insult: you brought that woman down to Glenfinlas, and I did not reproach you. I was civil, almost friendly to her. I wrote you a little note the night before you left, once again asking you to come to me and we would let bygones be bygones. You took no notice and that was the end. And—" again my voice broke, and I leant against the chair in my pain, grinding my teeth for control, and presently I mastered it. "And to-night you admit your guilt with Lady Rivers, and—you ask me calmly and without shame in what way you have forfeited my love and respect."

"I am no different from lots of other men."

## G W E N D A

"And is that your only defence?" I blazed. "And it is a lie. You *are* different. Men and women sin and are ashamed. *You* have no shame. There is something lacking in you. It is the kindest inference to draw. I verily believe you are not quite in your right mind. You—" I had to stop for my voice failed me. I was becoming desperately ill and the pain was frightful. "Ring—" I gasped.

For an instant he stood over me black with fury, his hands clenched. Was he going to choke the life out of me, I wondered curiously, and hardly cared. Then—he crossed the room and rang the bell violently. It scarcely seemed a second before Balbriggan appeared.

"Fetch Fanchette," I whispered, "at once."

"What are you going to do?" Lionel asked. "Do you want a doctor?" He sounded frightened through his anger.

"No. Please leave me."

"What are you going to do?"

"Will you leave me?"

He did not move, and, somehow, bent double with the pain, I managed to get to my room which Fanchette was just leaving.

"I want my bag at once," I said, "and my

## G W E N D A

hat and cloak. Tell Balbriggan to summon a cab while I get ready. I am ill."

She set up a cry. "Don't," I commanded harshly. "I want your help. I am going to a hospital now. Will you come? Don't waste time, I am in great pain and need all my strength."

Within five minutes we were in a taxicab. Fanchette calm, helpful, resourceful. We drove straight to a post office, and she examined a directory. We never thought or remembered that the London cabbies know most things. "St. Margaret's Hospital for Women" she directed him. And after that I knew little more till I was on a couch in a lift going up to the operating theatre, and then my senses returned with sickening and awful clearness.

I must finish another time.

October 12th. — Three o'clock had barely struck yesterday when my first visitor appeared — Fanchette. Fanchette, in the glory of a new toque with alarming outstanding wings, and the most rustling petticoat she has yet achieved. She fell on her knees in her customary French fashion and kissed my hands.

Then with fine scorn she whispered that the

## G W E N D A

lady in the next bed looked less attractive than ever this afternoon.

"Why?" I whispered back.

"Her nightdress is of longcloth," said Fanchette succinctly.

"Well, it's warmer than nainsook this weather," I suggested.

She shrugged her shoulders and dismissed Mrs. Philpots. She took little interest in people who wore longcloth nightdresses, and I wondered what she would have thought of your warm flannel ones.

"And how is Monsieur le Boots?" I enquired, sniffing at the lovely bunch of roses she had brought.

"I write to him no more, Madame," she replied briefly.

"You write to him no more?" In my excitement I turned on my left side, and she implored me to go back. "I can lie on either side now," I said grandly, "for a little while. Why have you ceased to write?"

"I do not want to raise false hopes in him."

"False hopes," I echoed. "Aren't you going to marry Monsieur le Boots?"

"No, Madame."

## G W E N D A

"Dear me," I said. "Whatever has made you change your mind?"

"I have reasons, Madame."

"And what are you going to do?"

"I am going to live with you, Madame, if you will permit it?" She pulled out the bows of my ribbon of the nearest plait to her.

"But I can't afford it," I said. "I have no money now. I shan't be able to keep a maid. You know—you have guessed, Fanchette, that I am not returning to Prince's Gate."

"Yes, Madame," her voice was practical. "I left last week."

"You have left? I did not know. I thought you would stay your month out."

"I was very miserable and lonely and had nothing to do. I slipped out quietly. I have comfortable rooms near here. I come each day to enquire for you, and the time passes. I wait for you to come out, then I am contented."

"Fanchette—" Suddenly I burst into tears and laid my hand on hers.

She was very distressed, and implored me not to weep. "Mrs. Prendergast and Mr. Drexel will be coming, is it not? And your nose will be a little red, Madame."

I laughed through my tears. "Fanchette you

## G W E N D A

are good to me. But I can't have you. I shouldn't be able to pay you your wages. And at first I go to Silvercombe," I said.

"And could I not go too? I would be useful while you got quite strong. And I love the sea very much. You will let me go?" She was very beseeching.

"Perhaps. I will write to my Aunt. I should like to have you. Fanchette—have you—do you ever see the Master?"

"Only once since I left. Madame I must be going, Mrs. Prendergast will be here soon." She was evidently embarrassed.

"Where did you see the Master—I mean Mr. Conyngham? you have left his service."

"In Piccadilly, Madame."

"Was he alone?"

"No, Madame."

"Tell me who was with him. You need not mind."

"A lady." She flushed crimson and rose to go.

"Was the lady very beautiful?"

"Some might think so. Madame, when will you be leaving here? I must give a week's notice at my rooms." She was not going to discuss Lady Rivers, and she was right.

## G W E N D A

"I leave on the 18th if I am strong enough. My bed is wanted."

"And I shall travel with you to Silvercombe?"

"Yes, please, Fanchette." And with a smile of triumph she left me.

Mrs. Prendergast and Peter Drexel came together, laden with flowers, lovely autumn flowers with their pungent delicious scent. How did they guess how much more I loved them than hothouse exotics? Dahlias, chrysanthemums, Michaelmas daisies, hollyhocks. They placed them on the bed, and they laughed at my indifference to the earwigs which crawled from the dahlias.

"The only insect I object to is a wood-louse," I said.

"Gwenda, you look better. Ever so much better, doesn't she Peter?" Mrs. Prendergast exclaimed, pleasure in her voice.

He regarded me critically, and for a moment held my hot hand in his own cool one.

"She looks better simply because she is so flushed and excited. Her hand is like a burning coal. Why do you get in such a state?" He frowned and looked at me severely.

"Did you leave your patients simply because



## G W E N D A

you were in a bad temper and wanted to vent it upon somebody who was defenceless?" I asked.

He laughed and drew a chair up to the bed. "You are begging the question. Why are you so flushed?"

"Fanchette insists upon remaining in my service and is going to Silvercombe with me. The news is exciting." This was the first time I had hinted in any way that I was not returning to Lionel, but I knew that they knew. Had they not been like brother and sister to me during my illness? Their extraordinary kindness, their attention, their sympathy had touched me beyond words.

"Going to Silvercombe! But I had counted on your coming to me. It is all settled. My husband and I want you very much, and Peter will take care of you, won't you Peter?"

Peter will take care of you! How comforting it sounded. I looked at his strong thin face, his pleasant humorous eyes, his alert confident person, and I knew what good care he *could* take of a person, but I shook my head.

"It is very good of you, Jane," for so she made me call her now, "frightfully kind of you, but I must go to Granty. She is expecting me,

## G W E N D A

counting the moments till I go she says, and she has been ill, too. We must get strong together. And Silvercombe is the only place I fancy. In November it is wonderfully attractive, there are late flowering roses, pansies and snapdragons. There are bits of gorse, streaks of flame here and there in the brown heather. There will be more sunshine than in London, and that is what I need. I feel like a bleached stick of celery. Thank you all the same."

"It is a long journey, much too long. Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth won't allow it," she said irritably.

"He won't know, and he will be glad to wash his hands of me," and I proceeded to tell them of "The Jackdaw of Rheims" and his finding me out in my nasty irony.

Peter laughed immoderately at first, and I distinctly heard Mrs. Philpots remark how noisy we were—then he became grave.

"It is necessary," he said. "It may seem absurd to you, and perhaps it is carried to an extreme, but Wynn-Shuttleworth is a busy man, everything must be in readiness for him, he can't be kept waiting."

"Of course," I returned, "you will stick up for your profession, and nobody wants him to

## G W E N D A

be kept waiting, but need the nurses make such a fuss and worry the poor patients so much? I was hot the other day, it was a close steamy morning. I wanted the counterpane down, it was heavy, and the nurse wouldn't allow it till after Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth had been. The bed wouldn't look so nice. Another nurse scolded me because I dropped some crumbs when I was having my lunch, it is difficult to eat when you are lying flat. She whisked them away from under my nose with a table napkin and remarked I might be a little girl of six."

Peter smiled and said I exaggerated.

"I don't," I returned vehemently. "There is altogether too much red tapeism, everything too cut and dried, too much law and order. I felt drowsy one night. I had been in a good deal of pain that day—perhaps you know all our backs are rubbed with ether at night to prevent bed-sores?"

"Perhaps I do," he replied dryly. "I have been in hospitals before now."

"It is unkind to speak to an invalid in such a manner," I observed.

"You don't sound like one."

"I am so tired of you two quarrelling about

## G W E N D A

hospitals," interjected Mrs. Prendergast plaintively, "Can't we talk about something else?"

"No," said her brother with decision, "we are going to thrash this out. Please continue. You felt drowsy one night after a good deal of pain——"

"And I asked the nurse on duty if she would mind, for once, doing my back before the time was due for it to be done. And she replied it was out of the question as she was going to her supper. I pleaded with her, but she was inexorable. I must tell you this operation takes about half a minute. One nurse raises you while another nurse dabs on the ether. I dropped asleep. She woke me up later. 'Now,' she said, 'I am ready.' I never closed my eyes that night."

He rose and walked to the window. His back looked very square and irritated. "That nurse was a bad nurse. She will never get on. To a dozen good nurses, there may be one bad one."

"Many more than that," I interrupted.

"I don't agree with you. And perhaps you forget that this place is kept up by charity."

Suddenly I felt ashamed. "I forgot," I said humbly. "I am sorry."

He strode back to the bed. "I didn't mean

## G W E N D A

that," he said roughly. "You misunderstood me. I—I am not quite such a brute. What I meant was, that hospitals can't afford skilled trained nurses throughout. There is a sister—a clever reliable, thoroughly trained woman, at the head of each ward, the rest are learning, being trained. Some are probationers, they have no difficult work allotted to them; then come the ones who have been at it a year or two. They are bound to make mistakes. The hours are long, there is no pay or very little, nurses like doctors are but human. They don't pretend to be infallible—at least, the sensible ones don't," he broke off with a laugh, and gave me his hand. "I must go," he said. "My time is up, and I am sorry for you, don't think that I am not. You are a brave plucky girl. You shouldn't be here by rights, but you might be in a worse place. Good-bye." For a moment he held my hand, "May I come again?"

"Rather," I replied. "You are as bracing as Blackpool, and I like being scolded."

"Scolded!" he raised his brows comically.

"Yes, you have simply badgered me, but I don't mind."

When he had gone I said: "I am afraid I have vexed him and that he thinks me a poor

## G W E N D A

sort of creature, and I don't want him to have that impression."

Mrs. Prendergast looked at me, and then she said a very astonishing thing.

"I was unaware that *you* posed, Gwenda. Peter worships the very ground you walk on, and you know it."

I lay and stared at her—gasping.

"Do you pretend that you didn't know Peter was in love with you?"

I shook my head, too amazed to speak.

"Honestly?"

"Honestly."

"And now you know it, are you glad?"

I considered this for a moment or two, and then I said simply "Very glad."

"And are you in love with him? You will forgive my asking you such very straight questions?"

"No. Not at all, I never thought of such a thing," I returned.

"And yet you are glad he is in love with you?"

I nodded. "It is such an honour. Your brother is so *very* nice."

"H'm," she said. "You are a strange girl. Do you realise what this means to Peter?"

## G W E N D A

"Means to him?" I echoed.

"It has glorified his life and made him wretched, glorified and darkened his life at one and the same moment. He is a changed man. You are married. You are beyond his reach. He is not strong enough not to see you, and when he does his depression afterward is dreadful to see. He knows that I know. I have always seen through Peter, he is as transparent and simple as a child. And it makes it worse for him knowing—" she hesitated.

"Knowing that I have left my husband."

"Exactly." She put her hand on mine and stroked it gently. "Gwenda, can I talk to you about it?" she asked.

"About what?"

"About your husband. We knew him for years. We had not the slightest idea that he could behave so—cruelly. Does it pain you to speak of him?"

"Yes, it does. I know you mean it kindly—but the hurt is too great yet—I—" I struggled for control. "I try not to think of him. I put him from me as much as possible. Sometimes I sob through the long hours of the night till I fall asleep from exhaustion. He has never enquired for me, never sent a message to me.

## G W E N D A

I hardly think I expected either, but—oh, how it hurts. I can't talk about it. Doesn't it seem strange—my husband hates and doesn't want me, and Peter, you tell me, loves me and wants me badly, and I can't be with one or the other."

"And from what you say," she returned, "you don't want to be with Peter?"

"I don't want to be with either. I once loved Lionel as much as it is possible for a woman to love a man, now, I hate him. Peter I have never learned to love, I couldn't be loving one man when I have been fighting to regain the affection of another. It is impossible. I am glad and proud beyond words that your brother cares for me, I won't even pretend that I am sorry that he does, for I am not, it gives me keen pleasure to know that he loves me. If I were free I should wish that I could return it, but it seems a little hopeless ever thinking of such a thing in the present position of affairs. Doesn't it?" I finished with a laugh.

"It does rather," she agreed. "And yet I can't understand any girl not caring for Peter."

"You are prejudiced," I said, "he is your brother. If I had no husband, I might think about it, but as it is, it is a waste of time." And then I changed the conversation to other topics.



## G W E N D A

I felt Peter would be anything but pleased at our discussing him; or did he guess that his sister would some day tell me? My cheeks burnt at the thought. Did he want me to know?

Granty, it doesn't seem even fair to him to tell *you*, but I wanted you to know that it is possible for a man to love me.

I am very feminine, and it seems to me that the world will smile behind my back and say the failure of my marriage is my own fault, and it hurts my pride. "What does it matter?" you will reply in your practical fashion, "what the world says. Don't be self-conscious and egotistical and make no mistake: the world doesn't bother its head about you half so much as you imagine."

Do you remember saying to me once when I was very young — perhaps I was eighteen: "Youth imagines it is the hub of the universe. Age knows that in the scheme of things it has played as small a part as the minutest grain of sand."

To-night I shall go to sleep saying to myself "I am only a grain of sand, I am only a grain of sand."

To-morrow I feel there will be a letter from you, and within a week's time, if I continue to

## G W E N D A

progress, I shall be with you. I shall lay my head on your dear pink shawl, inhale its familiar lavender scent, and look into your serene blue eyes.

Good-night,

GWENDA.

But I am not getting on so well as I did. I am always so hot and yet the weather is cold.

## LETTER XX

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 13th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I notice you say nothing of Lionel in your letter, and I think I know why. You still, perhaps, feel that I am like that woman in the Police Court. Nobody shall abuse my husband but myself! But no, not now. My loyalty is gone. How could it remain with me? I am not a saint as you well know. I have strong passions. Sometimes I feel I could kill Lionel, choke the life out of him; and were I to see Lady Rivers dying in a ditch I would give her no hand to help her out. So write as you will. Let yourself go. Say all the things I haven't the strength to say because of my beating pulses and fevered brain.

Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth wonders at times why my temperature is up. I see him examine the chart above my bed with knitted brow. "What has she been doing?" he asks. The nurse shakes her head—"nothing, Sir."

## G W E N D A

How can I say: "I am lying here a helpless log with thoughts that would frighten you were you to know them. In my impotent rage I dig my nails into my hands and bury my face in my pillow to keep from crying out curses and recriminations."

"She is of an excitable temperament," the great man says, "keep her quiet."

Keep her quiet! I laugh hysterically. The great man frowns. "As long as your temperature is up, you don't leave this place," he pronounces, and at once I am calm. I couldn't stand much more of Mrs. Philpots, and I picture myself lying at your side, my head against a cool linen pillow-case and the sound of the sea in my ears.

You ask me why did I fly to a hospital instead of to a Nursing Home.

I had very little money of my own. All that belonged to Lionel I left on my dressing-table with the jewels that Lionel had given me—the showy necklace, my engagement ring, the diamond pendant, *even* my wedding ring. Do the people here wonder why the third finger of my left hand is bare? Perhaps it was foolish and dramatic of me to leave the ring, but I felt I should be soiled were I to keep anything that

## G W E N D A

had belonged to him. And you must remember that I was nearly demented with pain that night. As in a dream I heard Fanchette talking to the hospital officials, and found myself being carried on a sort of stretcher to a room, undressed, and put into long woollen sea boots, my own nightdress, a flannel jacket, and a pink head flannel; and then being placed on a couch and smothered with blankets and wheeled to a lift. 'And then because the pain was so excruciating I set up a shrill laugh to stop myself from screaming, and the lift man and a nurse stared at me in amazement, and the nurse said I must calm myself and be good and not be frightened. And then—well, Henley tells you what happened next—

“You are carried in a basket;  
Like a carcase from the shambles  
To the theatre, a cockpit  
Where they stretch you on a table.

Then they bid you close your eyelids,  
And they mask you with a napkin,  
And the anæsthetic reaches  
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder  
In a rushing swaying rapture,  
While the voices at your elbow  
Fade—receding—fainter—farther.

## G W E N D A

Lights about you shower and tumble  
And your blood seems crystallizing—  
Edged and vibrant yet within you  
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Then the lights grow fast and furious;  
And you hear a noise of waters,  
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,  
In an agony of effort,

Till a sudden lull accepts you,  
And you sound an utter darkness . . .  
And awaken . . . with a struggle . . .  
On a hushed, attentive audience."

But I didn't awaken on a hushed, attentive audience.

I woke to the sound of loud groans (Mrs. Philpots had also been operated on that afternoon) and the beating of something—afterward I found Mrs. P. was thumping her locker by her bed with a fan. And I wondered what had happened and where I could be. Beneath my chin rested a small china bowl—you can imagine for what, and over me was a large cage arrangement to keep the bedclothes from pressing on the wound, and I felt so hideously sick and ill that I would have gladly died. Presently as my senses became clearer I found I was lying quite flat without any pillow, and that I was still in horrible pain.

## G W E N D A

A nurse bent over the bed and spoke to me, but I felt too badly to reply, then a large impressive man (Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth) felt my pulse, said I would do, and bustled away; and for an hour or two I lay in a half stupor racked by tearing pain and listening to the cries of the woman in the other bed. "God, God," she yelled, in a sort of groaning whisper, "help me. Do something, oh, the pain! It's cruel, it's cruel, God, God. Give me morphia. I can't bear it. Nurse, why don't you come to me? Oh God, you are cruel. Help! won't somebody help me? Nurse send for the doctor——"

And the nurse sent for him, and when he came he did nothing but tell her to be quiet. He couldn't and wouldn't give her morphia. She must go to sleep, and she must be quiet, she was disturbing me. She was going on beautifully. She was bound to have some pain the first few hours, and she must bear it bravely . . .

Then he came across to me and asked me if I were comfortable. I begged in a whisper for some water, but he shook his head. It might cause me to be sick, and I was too weak to do anything but acquiesce dumbly.

The hours passed slowly. My thirst became intolerable, and my body burnt with heat. A

## G W E N D A

blanket was next to me, no cool sheet, and the feel of the hot irritating wool nearly sent me frantic.

At eleven o'clock or thereabouts, the young house surgeon came on his last round. He felt my pulse, enquired about my temperature, and again I pleaded for a little water. But he was inexorable. When he had gone the slow tears trickled down my cheeks. I was in grinding pain, I longed unspeakably to turn on my side, if only for a second, and I would have bartered my soul for a pillow.

I never slept through that long, long night. Mrs. Philpots had ceased her cries, and from her laboured breathing I knew that her pain was lost in slumber. Sometimes she moaned a little, but she was unconscious, and that was bliss. Occasionally a night nurse looked in to see that all was right with us. There was little she could do, we were neither allowed food—which we certainly didn't want, nor drink, nor morphia, nor anything. We just had to lie still and allow nature to heal us in her own way.

As the hours passed my mouth became so parched that I found I was unable to articulate. When the nurse bent over me I tried to frame the word "water," but my dry swollen lips re-



## G W E N D A

fused to move. I pointed to a jug on the washstand, but again she shook her head. "It is against the rules," she whispered. "You cannot have anything till 6 o'clock." She saw by my face I wanted to know the time. "It is 3 o'clock now." And she left me.

And in those three hours I tasted purgatory. My head lolled from side to side, my body felt like a burning coal, my wound seemed to be on fire. And all the time before my fevered vision I saw a little stream of water gushing from the rocks, a little stream of water I saw when walking with Uncle Sandy to Loch Katrine, springing from moss-covered rocks. Splashing the ferns in its fall, covering them with diamond drops, making a sound most delicious and musical.

I pictured myself lying amongst the wet ferns with the water falling on to me, trickling down my burning cheeks and into my parched mouth. Splashing over my neck and hair, and hands. And again blinding tears dropped on to the hot woolly blanket. I could not sob, it hurt too much. Then I thought of Water Marsh at home, fed by the brook, with cress and waving weeds and kingcups; and I with bare feet paddling about as I did as a child frock pinned up,

## G W E N D A

sleeves rolled back, and hair flying in the wind. From that I passed to the garden at Sunset after a shower of rain. I recalled the scent of the wet box bordering the paths, and of the roses when I pressed my face into their moist petalled hearts and snuffed up the sweet drops ; and of the privet in flower already inviting the bees to venture forth as the rain had passed and it contained much honeyed sweetness for those who cared to cull.

You will say it was foolish of me to torture myself thus, but I could not help it. Our thoughts are not under our control when we are feverish.

And so that night of horror passed and the dawn crept into the room revealing the colour-washed walls and the lockers by our beds (in which were stored bandages and antiseptic wool and various appliances) and the cheap prints and brightly coloured texts which assured us that " God is Love," and " The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not Want," and " Joy cometh in the Morning," which last I thought was an irony, nothing short of cruel, for if there is any time when an invalid is feeling worse than another it is in the early morning.

The roar of London had begun, milk carts

## G W E N D A

with their rattling cans, and heavy drays rumbled along the streets. A fire station butts on to the side of the hospital, and at about five o'clock the engines were called out, and the noise as they tore over the cobbled stones, snorting and shrieking, would have made me leap if I *could* have leapt.

And at last six o'clock arrived and my water, and as the nurse entered the room it seemed to me she was a shining angel of mercy and eagerly I stretched out my hands. And—she held to my lips one spoonful of *warm* water with which she said I could rinse out my mouth, but must not swallow.

Oh, the cruelty and bitterness of my disappointment: Round and round in my mouth I rolled that insipid warm water, and dared I swallow it? But no, she was a large firm nurse with a moustache.

When she had gone I did a very wicked thing, so rash, so foolish that I hold my breath when I think of it now. On the shelf of my locker was a bowl of roses which Fanchette had left me. By stretching out an arm I could reach it. I could not raise my head more than a couple of inches, but I managed to get that bowl to my lips and I drank. And as I drank I knew that

## G W E N D A

I was swallowing germs and all sorts of terrible things that would set up septic poisoning and kill me at once; but better die that way than from thirst.

Providence had helped me. All flowers are removed from the wards at night, but this bowl of roses had been overlooked. It had apparently been left for me. And then I slept. Through the day little sips of warm milk and water were administered to us and we slept at intervals.

And then another long night was to be faced, and again Mrs. Philpots whimpered and cried out and called upon God to help her; and once she became so noisy that I turned my head toward her and said "S-sh." And she was so astonished that she did hush. It was a queer noise I made, something like the hiss of a gander, and whenever she began to groan I shoo'd at her till she stopped, and gradually I shoo'd her to sleep. And when the nurse came to give us our medicine, or milk, I have forgotten which, I implored her not to wake Mrs. Philpots and I would take her dose as well as my own.

And so the days and nights passed, always in pain, sometimes sick, and often asleep. Till at

## G W E N D A

the end of a week my suffering began to lessen and lessen till it went.

I have various dates stowed away in my mind by which I remember the stages of my progress : At the end of twenty-four hours I was allowed to have a pillow, my gratitude was enormous. On the fifth day I had a little fish and thin bread and butter. On the sixth I received Mrs. Prendergast, my first visitor. Mrs. Philpots saw Mr. Philpots for ten minutes on the third day, and I was very jealous—not of Mr. Philpots who resembles a mournful music master without pupils, but because *I* was not permitted to have a visitor. I spoke of my grievance to a nurse, and she replied I was not as well as the occupant of the other bed.

“In what respect?” I whispered with some asperity, and she replied she wasn’t there to explain the medical aspects of our individual cases, but to nurse us, wash us, feed us and enforce obedience, and would I open my mouth at once as she wished to take my temperature.

On the eighth day the cage which supported the bedclothes was removed and I ceased to feel like a hen in a coop.

But I will not worry you with any further

## G W E N D A

details of my illness. They are not particularly interesting I know, but this writing helps to pass the time, and there is so little to write about.

In five days I shall be out of here. Just think of it! Mrs. Philpots wants to tell me more about her Cousin Bob Williamson. He is a soda water manufacturer, and I am getting quite a good bit interested in him. He is enormously stout and his wife is under five feet in height and weighs just over seven stone; and it appears when they are in bed she has a desperate time trying to get comfortable. I couldn't see why at first, and Mrs. Philpots hinted that I was very dull. He is so frightfully heavy that he weighs the mattress down his side to such an extent that a slope is formed and she comes sliding down on to him at all hours of the night which annoys him very considerably.

I laughed so much over this story that I really hurt myself; and then Mrs. Philpots searched about in her mind for more, but none was so funny as that.

October 14th.—Sometimes the days seem very long. The convalescent stage of an illness is

## G W E N D A

more trying than any other. Don't you find it so?

So you have been up in your room. You have beaten me. But had you also had an operation you would still have beaten me. Yours is a more indomitable will than mine.

To-day I am fractious and depressed. The Sister tells me she fears I shall not be allowed to leave here on the 18th. She doesn't give any reason why. The prospect of being in this place an hour longer than I anticipated fills me with dismay.

Of course, I fainted when the stitches were removed, most women, with the exception of Goliath-like creatures without a nerve in their bodies, would faint; it is such a horrid sickening sort of sensation. And what do you think they gave me when I came round—soda water. Can you imagine colder comfort? It so tickled me that it made me laugh, and the Sister says I am one of the queerest patients she has had in her ward. When she expects me to cry I laugh, and vice versa.

I am picturing the woods to-day at home, and I imagine I hear the thud of a chestnut as it falls to earth with its soft fragrant carpet of leaves, and I can see the flutter of yellow birch

## G W E N D A

leaves as they too return to dear Mother earth, and Mrs. Philpots will *keep* interrupting my pretty fancies with her woes.

She has what is known as a surface stitch abscess, nothing in the least serious, and she has made as much fuss over it as if she had had her operation all over again. She says it is the fault of the nurses, that they have been careless with her, not attended to her properly, and that a stitch abscess only arises from bad nursing. She has talked of it morning, noon and night, and has just announced that she shall ask her husband to remove her in an ambulance before anything else goes wrong. I have had difficulty to prevent myself from skipping (figuratively speaking) at this good news, but tried out of politeness to look as if I should miss her.

"The nurses and doctors will be vexed of course, they will know that my faith in them has gone," she said, her mountainous body heaving the bedclothes up and down as she let forth a big sigh of satisfaction at the prospect of the discomforture. "Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth will give it the nurses, and I shall make a point of telling him what I think of them."

"I shouldn't," I said, with some heat. "Just



## G W E N D A

think of what they do for us." Peter Drexel's rebuke had done me some good.

"They get paid for it."

"But they don't, very few of them receive anything but their board and lodging," I returned.

"Well, they like their work," she persisted.

"Like nursing patients such as you and I?"

"I am sure I have been a good patient. I have given as little trouble as I possibly could. I am used to operations, and know the ropes of the place. It is different for you, of course."

I checked a smile at her gentle patronage. "Yet you persist in leaving before the time is up."

"Because I am not satisfied with the treatment. I have no right to have a stitch abscess."

"Well I am sure they don't want you to have one. It can be no pleasure to them," I retorted.

She ignored my sarcasm and announced that she should give a handsome donation when she left, and that I mustn't imagine she was living on charity.

"My husband is a most liberal man," she said. "Probably he will give £10. And these hospitals must be jolly glad to get patients in our position."

## G W E N D A

"Do you think so?" I replied slowly, "I fancy I should much prefer the poor were I in the committee's position. We, who have had comfortable homes, naturally expect more when we come to such institutions than those who have come from wretched surroundings. I am angry because I am roused at 6 o'clock in the morning, I jeer at the fuss made over the surgeon, (and I still jeer a bit to myself) and you resent having a stitch abscess. There is a dumb resignation in the poor when they suffer—I have seen it at home. They may not be grateful for what they receive, but they at least don't grumble at it. If you and I had undergone operations in our homes, at the hands of Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth, they would cost us, with nursing, a hundred and fifty pounds at the very least. I try to remember this now when I am inclined to grumble."

"Dear me," she said, "I wonder you came here."

"I came because I couldn't afford to go anywhere else, and I expect your reason was the same," I said more gently, as her cheeks had flushed. "I don't suppose either of us wanted to come, but as we are here, don't you think we ought to make the best of things?"

## G W E N D A

"Perhaps," she returned grudgingly, "but all the same I shall leave to-morrow." And I said I certainly should.

A nurse has just been in with lovely flowers from Mrs. Prendergast and Peter. They send some each day and lovely fruit, most of which I am not allowed to touch, and they know it, but still send. To-morrow is visiting day, and they will come to see me as usual and I am rather dreading seeing Peter. At first I felt glad and proud when I heard that he cared for me, but now I am sorry—if it be true, for of course his sister as likely as not has made a mistake in her supposition, and his feelings toward me may be those of mere friendship. I shall feel awkward and self-conscious when I meet him, nervous and stupid, and it is a pity. I so much enjoyed having him as a friend, and don't want him as a lover.

It is tiresome that a woman can *never* have a man friend throughout her life. Some women pretend they can, but they only get talked about if they do. If a man is thirty years older or twenty years younger than a woman and she is seen about with him much, all her friends and acquaintances nod their heads and incline them toward each other and whisper "there is more

## G W E N D A

in this than they would have us believe." Of course there are a few women who can embark upon a friendship with a man, I am sure Mrs. Philpots could with absolute safety, but then would any man want to be her friend? I can't conceive it.

Granty, I am growing nasty and sour, but keep your love for me, won't you? I have been a failure, a few can support success with dignity—but not many. It wants a fineness and simplicity of character which few possess, but how many come through the muddy waters of failure with any gain to their characters? Either they go under altogether, or they whine and become cynical and soured. You must help me to win through, dear.

G W E N D A.

## LETTER XXI

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, W. C., Oct. 16th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

Quite a number of important events have taken place since I last wrote to you, which was only the day before yesterday. I have sat up for half an hour in a chair; Mrs. Philpots has departed; a night-nurse has been taken off duty because of her unkindness to the patients; and Mr. Peter Drexel has written me a letter saying that he has been obliged to leave Town on business but will be back by the time I am discharged from the hospital, as he intends, with my permission, to take me down to Silvercombe himself.

"It is ridiculous," he writes, "to undertake such a journey in the weak condition you will be in, accompanied only by a maid. Only a rash and very foolish girl would contemplate taking such a step. I have been your medical adviser once, therefore I feel in a position to scold you and give you some advice—which is: Come to

## G W E N D A

my sister for a few days while you feel your feet and gain a little strength and then go to Silvercombe. And may I venture to put a question to you: why this awful hurry to tear off to Devonshire? We much fear, Jane and I, that you intend taking root there, and once this is achieved will there be any chance of your ever consenting to be transplanted to another soil even for a day or two? You have, as you well know, two warm friends in this grimy old city. Won't you give them an opportunity of proving their affection for you by being permitted to nurse and tend you for a little while? It will be selfish of you to refuse."

Isn't it a nice kind practical letter? So exactly like him; and I can see the set of his mouth as he penned those lines.

I don't believe he is a scrap in love with me. It is a figment of Jane Prendergast's brain. A man in love couldn't possibly have written anything so friendly and sensible. He would have written either very guardedly and primly, or let himself go altogether.

So that little romance cleared away, what shall I do? I am horribly weak, there is not a doubt about it, and it is a great disappointment to me. When I am lying here, propped up

## G W E N D A

with pillows and wearing my sky-blue dressing jacket—blue always gives me an elated sensation—I feel as well and as strong as a horse; but, oh, when they got me up just now how did I feel? It is not easy to describe. Suddenly when I put my feet to the ground, my legs appeared to be made of tissue paper and they crumpled up beneath me. And, of course, being impossible to stand upon tissue paper legs all crumpling up, I should have fallen had not a nurse seized me and half carried me to a chair. And what do you think she said, quite in a voice of triumph? “There, I told you so.” Can you imagine anything baser or more exasperating? And because I was trying to focus things correctly, for all the furniture appeared to be jumping about the room and I saw it through a swimming black darkness, I was unable to reply for a moment, but when clearness of vision returned and the washstand went back to its proper place, I said: “I don’t know what you mean. I feel perfectly well, and if I didn’t, it’s unkind to say ‘I told you so.’”

And she laughed and wondered how I looked when I wasn’t well and felt faint.

“Probably very interesting,” I replied. “I have never seen myself when I have felt faint.

## G W E N D A

You can't be looking into a mirror when you are endeavouring to prevent the floor from hitting you in the face." And while I was speaking she suddenly and most unexpectedly seized my feet and placed them upon another chair, nearly upsetting my balance altogether.

"Don't do that again," I said severely, "or else give me warning."

Again she laughed. "You'll never be allowed to leave here in a couple of days, you're no stronger than a baby. You should just see the way your colour comes and goes."

"Need you keep referring to my strength," I said, struggling after composure, for her words seemed as a death knell to my hopes. "I have wonderful recuperative powers once I am up and about."

"You won't leave this place inside a week," she repeated.

I did not tell her that I had never met a person's conversation so singularly devoid of interest as hers, as I thought she might be offended, but I closed my eyes as a hint that she might go.

"You don't look so bad when it's getting dark, but this illness *has* aged you," was her next comforting observation. There did not seem to



## G W E N D A

be anything to say to this; my glass told me that she was speaking the truth, and I lay and wondered weakly why it was that truthful people were usually so unlovable.

"Are you going to be married?" was her next startling question. "There's a gentleman who comes to ask for you every day."

"A gentleman?" I opened my eyes and my heart suddenly began to beat violently. "What's he like? Tall, dark, handsome?"

"No, not tall, and rather plain. I think he came to see you one afternoon. I wasn't on duty, but I caught sight of him as I was going down the passage. And I must be going now. Eh, you have flushed. And you can't have been a widow very long. You don't look old."

"A widow!" I stared at her. "Who said I was a widow?"

"Well nobody," she admitted. "But as you are called Mrs. Conyngham and your husband has never been to see you, I concluded you were a widow."

"Dear me," I said, "how extraordinary."

"And aren't you one?"

"No," I replied, "and—and I don't want to talk any more. I am tired."

Rather reluctantly, she went, saying she

## G W E N D A

would return in a quarter of an hour to put me back to bed.

Granty, the disappointment that her words brought to me was cruel. And oh, what a fool I am, and where is my pride? It can't be that I still care for Lionel? It is impossible. My love is dead absolutely. It died the night of our final interview. I hate him now. I have kept telling you so in my letters, haven't I? There can't be a mistake. He has never been to see me, or sent me one little message of sympathy. He is always with Lady Rivers. He loves *her* not me. I can't love a person who doesn't love me. I hate him. I keep repeating the words I *hate* him. But why did my heart beat in that strange fashion, why did the blood flame to my cheeks? It must be because I am so weak.

I am too tired to write any more, but will finish this letter to-morrow. And to-morrow surely I shall know whether I am to remain a prisoner here any longer or be with you at Silvercombe in a fortnight's time.

October 17th.—The decree has gone forth. I am not to leave here just yet. It would not be wise.

## G W E N D A

Mr. Wynn-Shuttleworth was kind when he saw my tears which I *could* not keep back. "It is disappointing I know," he said gently, "but another week will make all the difference in the world. We want our patients not to disgrace us, but to do us credit. You must be brave."

Always I am told that "I must be brave." And I am so tired of trying to be brave, and I fail so dismally. My pillow is wet in the night with my tears, and there is nobody now to hear my sobs Mrs. Philpots has gone, her bed is not yet occupied, the night nurse visits me rarely, for there is little to do now, and so I lie and weep.

How long is it since I was happy? Was it in another life, Granty? I feel I should find strength if I were with you. I am so weary—

"Shoulders and loins ache . . . !  
Ache, and the mattress  
Runs into bowlders and hummocks,  
Glows like a kiln, while the bedclothes—  
Tumbling, importunate, daft,—  
Ramble and roll."

But one little bit of happiness I possess, and that is to know you are gaining strength, and have been out in the garden. So the ivy against the barn is flowering once more, giving to the

## G W E N D A

bees a last bit of honeyed sweetness before they shut up house for the winter, and the laurestinus too. And I have them to look forward to when I go home—ivy flowers and laurestinus and the sun shining upon them. So, after all, there is something left for me.

GWENDA.

## LETTER XXII

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, Oct. 19th.

MY DEAR GRANTY:

I fear that my last letter to you was a little depressed.

How true was your remark that my pen would probably run away with me in a breakneck fashion; and you have been the victim. But I am not going to say I am sorry because I believe you have been a willing victim; that is your way.

Some people are born unselfish and some honest and some charitable and some sympathetic, and the greatest of these is the last. Unselfishness and charity are very pleasant attributes; honesty in others is very stimulating; but what we need most of all in our earthly pilgrimage is sympathy.

A person may insist upon giving you the most comfortable chair, the tit-bit of the joint, the warmest place on the hearth, may

## G W E N D A

be willing to fetch and carry for you, save you all the disagreeable things of life, be absolutely unselfish toward the body part of you, and never notice that your soul is starving.

Most of us suffer from the frailty of being more interested in ourselves than in anything or in anybody else in the world. Some of us more than others. And when a person is sympathetic enough to discuss with us ourself—*myself*, that person is very popular and much beloved. All popular people are sympathetic. They are interested in our work, our play, our sorrows, our ambitions, our hopes. They have good memories. A month has elapsed since you met them, yet they enquire how the new cook is going on and whether your evening frock turned out a success, and the picture you are painting finished. You are gratified and touched at their interest in you. When they have gone you remark how *nice* they are. You don't realise that you haven't enquired about their cooks and frocks and paintings, or whatever lies near to *their* hearts.

You are one of the former, and I am wondering sadly if I am one of the latter.

For five months I have poured out my woes

## G W E N D A

and thoughts and doings to you, and have always found the sympathy I have sought and needed. It has never failed me. And during these five months what notice have I taken of your woes and doings and pleasures and occupations? Not much, dear heart. And yet I *have* been interested. But sympathy unexpressed, mute, is not much use to anybody, is it?

But I have thought of you more often than I can tell you. I have pictured you in the upright, extremely uncomfortable drawing-room chair, to which you are so unaccountably attached, reading *The Nineteenth Century*. There is a paper on Free Trade with which you disagree. Your brow is knit, with an irritable movement you rearrange your shawl, the man is a fool. I have seen you on summer days seated on the milking stool, close to a currant bush, engaged in picking fruit for jam, you are wearing the battered hat, the little feather of which, so rusty and thin, droops sadly. I have been with you when you have been patiently using up things for supper, while in your secret heart wishing that old Hannah would be a little more wasteful. And I have always been with you in spirit when at night

## G W E N D A

you have gone to my old room and standing  
by the bed whispered

“One to watch  
Two to pray  
Three to keep  
All harm away.”

Whatever I have been doing, dancing, playing bridge, at a theatre, or in the quiet of my own room, I have never failed to send my thoughts through the night to a cottage at Silvercombe.

As I write, a pair of bright brown eyes watch me from the other bed, if I smile or wipe away a tear their gaze becomes uncomfortably intent. They belong to a new patient who has taken the place of Mrs. Philpots, and she is as small as the other was large.

Her hands are tiny and her body so slight that as she lies there she reminds me of a small brown bird. She is to be operated on this afternoon, for what I don't know. She is unlike Mrs. Philpots, and is not communicative. Poor, wee, thing, I hope she won't suffer much. And if she does, I know she will be silent about it.

I had been up again yesterday for half an hour, and had just got back to bed when Mrs. Prendergast,—I can't get into the way of calling her Jane,—flew in for a few minutes on her way



## G W E N D A

to a bridge party. She took my breath away by saying: "Do you know why Peter hasn't been to see you?"

"He is away," I replied.

"How do you know?" she demanded.

"He wrote and told me."

She moved restlessly about the room. "That is not the real reason."

I looked at her interrogatively.

"Have you ever thought how very difficult it must be for a man of Peter's temperament to prevent himself from putting his arms around the woman he loves when he sees her as frail and lonesome and unprotected as you?"

I put up my hand for her to hush.

"I won't," she said obstinately, "he wants to strain you to his heart, to smother your face with kisses, to pour out his words of love. There!"

"How imaginative you are," I said quietly, "it is wonderful."

"It is not imagination. Peter is my only brother. I am devoted to him. You are ruining his life."

"And is that my fault?" I asked. "Were I free I might love to hear your words, but as it is, don't you think it is a little cruel?"

## G W E N D A

In an instant she was by my bed. "My poor darling, forgive me. But I love you both so much, and don't you think you could ever care for Peter?" She looked at me eagerly.

"I don't know. I don't think so; but if I could, what's the use?"

"You could divorce your husband."

"Divorce Lionel!" I sat up in bed catching my breath.

"Have you never thought of such a possibility?"

I shook my head.

"But it's what every woman—what every normal woman would do. He has treated you abominably, cruelly, heartlessly. Ah, I must speak—let me, dear. What's the use of pretending any more. Down at Glenfinlas Peter could have horsewhipped him, whipped the life out of him. You were away in your room ill, suffering, and Lionel openly, deliberately and publicly made love to that woman. It was sickening. I have seen Peter with clenched hands and eyes suffused with passion fighting with himself to keep his hands off him. He has gone to your sick room for safety—till he had conquered himself, got his passion under control,

## G W E N D A

And now—" She broke off, and seizing a poker smashed a piece of coal in the fire till it sent up a tongue of flame.

"Yes? Go on."

"And now—while you are ill, while you are lying in a ward of a public hospital, while your face seems to grow whiter and your eyes larger, the man you call husband is shocking the sensibilities of even the most hardened of sinners. "He might have waited," they say, "waited till that poor little wife of his is over her illness!" And yet it is more that woman's fault than his, it is generally more the woman's fault; and while he is hers—the worst and the best of him—body and soul, she cares no more about him than she cares for the man who blacks her boots."

"But why—? Why does she bother with him?"

"He is of use to her. She plays with him as a cat plays with a mouse. He is her tool. It is said that she does it to anger her own husband who in a fit of passion divorced her and yet still loves her. That is where her danger lies. By her beauty she exercises a sort of enchantment over men of a certain type. She drives them nearly frantic. At one moment she

## G W E N D A

is gentle, sweetly feminine, demanding their love and protection, and arousing in them as much of chivalrous self-sacrifice as they are capable of, and the next, if she has other fish to fry, she casts them off like a worn-out glove. She was one of the most talked of women in Town before she married. Her husband is a bounder, a Jew, and rolling in money, he liked her title, but he has one decent instinct—he loves her, and still loves her. I am sorry for him, and in a curious way I am sorry for Lionel, for he is weak and—it strikes me at times there is something abnormal about him, something wanting, his head is a curious shape.”

“Has that struck *you*?” I cried. “For some time I have noticed it. I—I have tried to make allowances.”

“You poor little thing.” She knelt and took my hand in hers. “You have made too many allowances. I do not mean that there is anything lacking in his brain development, but I do mean—may I speak plainly?”

I nodded assent.

“That had he not been trained—my husband says Lionel’s mother was a very nice and charming woman—that had he not been educated, surrounded by the refinements and luxuries of

## G W E N D A

life, he would have belonged to the criminal class."

I started violently.

"Forgive me," she whispered. "What a fool I am, I believe your temperature is up again. Your hand is burning. What would Peter say? Gwenda, for his sake, for your own sake, for everybody's sake, won't you let Lionel pass out of your life? It will be for the best."

"You mean—" somehow I couldn't say the words.

"I mean, divorce him. Put him from you."

I shuddered and buried my face in my hands. "I couldn't. I simply couldn't. I don't believe in divorce. I shall never live with him again. But oh, I cannot do it. I cannot wash my dirty linen in public. Think of it, going through the Courts, and the wife is always blamed. They will say it is my fault. I have been unable to keep his affection. I have failed as a wife."

"Rot." Her voice was full of scorn. "And do you care for the opinion of those who frequent the divorce courts? And as for washing your dirty linen in public, it is washed already, it is shouted from the house tops."

I shrank at her words. And then with her arms about me she made me laugh at the comi-

## G W E N D A

cal despair of her voice: "I am the biggest ass that ever breathed, I am no more fit to visit a sick person than a lunatic is. I am going before I can do any more mischief. And they will be wanting to make up the number for bridge." She drew on her long gloves. "Good-bye, dear."

"You have been a sight for sore eyes," I sighed. "I never saw anyone with a lovelier figure. And you have, by your words, given me fresh food for thought. My thoughts get very monotonous: food, bandages, medicine, Silvercombe, Uncle Sandy, you, Peter, Granty. I want a change."

"And you never think of your husband?" she queried.

"I try not to more than I can help. It makes me cry, and then if I am discovered I am scolded by an extremely stern nurse."

Suddenly she bent over me, and framing my face in her hands, she looked at me searchingly. "Gwenda, you don't still care for that husband of yours?"

"Of course not," I stammered. "Certainly not," but my eyes dropped before the scrutiny in hers.

"A woman's heart," she observed oracularly,

## G W E N D A

“is the strangest, sometimes the most beautiful, and always the most inexplicable of all God’s creations.”

And then she left me; and I weakly laughed off and on for some time, till the little lady with the bright eyes politely hoped I wasn’t hysterical.

October 20th.—Fanchette has just left me. I am allowed to see visitors most days now, but there are not many to come. Peter still keeps away, and I miss him more than I thought it would be possible. His kindness, his whimsical, unexpected observations, his quiet calm presence always brought me strength and peace. One touch of his cool strong fingers seemed to quiet my pulse as by magic. He sends me flowers, messages, good advice, but I want him. And there again, the mere fact of his staying away proves how strong he is. A weak man would come, and I only want him as a friend.

But I started out to tell you about Fanchette and not to talk of Peter Drexel.

She has made all arrangements for our journey next week, and is a veritable tower of strength. She is also glad I am not going to the Prendergasts. I believe she thinks she will

## G W E N D A

have a better chance of my entire management at Silvercombe than in Town. I can plainly see that Fanchette intends to manage me for the rest of my life as old Hannah manages you. What is it that makes *us* so weak in the hands of servants? I have not dared to tell her that Peter is travelling with us. I shall be much stronger in a day or two. I have walked twice the length of the room to-day, but am glad to be back again and be coddled by Fanchette.

She has been brushing my hair. She says I must have new ribbons.

"For one week," I remonstrated, "surely these will do?"

"A yard and a half of ribbon at 6d. a yard could not ruin anybody, Madam," she assures me, and I have told her to take ninepence from my purse. When Fanchette begins to argue, ninepence is a cheap price to pay for it to cease.

"You will want a new teagown, Madame, for Silvercombe——"

"Shall I? Won't my blue one do? It would clean——"



## LETTER XXIII

ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN,  
BLOOMSBURY, LONDON, Oct. 29th.

DEAR UNCLE SANDY:

I want you to come to us—Granty and me.

Lionel is dead. He died suddenly this afternoon, and Granty lies in an unconscious condition at the Hyde Park Hotel.

Peter Drexel and Mrs. Prendergast are doing all they can for us, but I want you. You were Lionel's uncle, how strange to say *were*, and you are my dear kind friend.

They, the nurses and Peter, want me to go to sleep. Aren't people funny? Granty lies fighting for her life, unconscious, in some strange spirit world, and they want me to sleep. Peter thinks she will rally, people rarely die from shock, he says, and I know that her heart was sound. He sends me messages by telephone every half hour. Her pulse is a little stronger, but I am nearly distracted with fear.

I don't seem to mind that Lionel is dead. I only think of Granty.

## G W E N D A

She came up from Silvercombe unexpectedly this afternoon and suddenly walked into my room, to Fanchette and me. Fanchette was brushing my hair.

The joy of it, the intense happiness as that slight upright figure stood beside me!

I clung to her laughing, babbling incoherent nonsense, the tears pouring down my cheeks. But she was strangely white and still—still as the earth is still before a storm.

She returned my kisses; she brooded over me with a hungry look in her eyes; she passed her small, white hand over my face and hair.

Presently she spoke: "I came to satisfy myself that you were going on well. The report that you were still too weak to travel alarmed me. Your kind friend Dr. Drexel, in reply to a letter of mine, wrote reassuringly. Still, I was not satisfied. Doctors don't know, they are very ignorant. But—chiefly I came up to see your husband, to see Lionel to have five minutes' talk with him. One—" she spoke slowly and as with difficulty, "one can say a lot in five minutes."

She moved toward the door. "I will come back. I shan't be long. I would have gone straight to him but I felt I must see you first

## G W E N D A

to find out how things were and—it is worse than I expected. . . . God, how you must have suffered.”

There was a note in her voice as that of some wounded animal crying for the loss of her young; and she stood a shaken, broken figure. Then, with a supreme effort, she pulled herself together. “I am weak,” she murmured in a little half-apologetic manner, “weak after my illness and the doctor’s treatment which nearly killed me outright. But I am strong enough to make your husband shrink before me, the Cur, the white-livered cur. And that such men should live, should be allowed to live after bringing such a look to a woman’s face. . . . Gwenda, my little Gwenda,” she hid her face in her hands struggling for control, “Your eyes . . . we must bring back the light . . . somehow.” She passed out of the room and quietly closed the door.

“Fanchette,” I cried, “follow her. Don’t let her see you, but never let her out of your sight.”

And I lay still, hands pressed to my beating heart.

Have you ever known what it means to lie still when the world is crashing around you?

## G W E N D A

And after a long long while Peter Drexel came to me. And he was very gentle, kneeling beside the bed, and I knew that something terrible had come into my life.

"I can bear it," I said, "anything, anything in the whole wide world so long as it . . . isn't . . . Granty."

He took my hand in his. "It isn't Granty, though she is suffering from shock. It is Lionel, your husband. Will you be brave?"

"He is dead?"

"Yes," he said, "he died suddenly." And my laughter rang through the ward that it was he and not she.

"Hush," he commanded; "for her sake you must calm yourself. She is unconscious, and very ill. But she will rally, I think. Everything that is possible is being done for her. I will let you know constantly of her progress. Fanchette is outside. She will tell you all for I must go." For an instant he laid a cool hand on my forehead, and at once I was calm. "It is wise to tell things to people of your temperament," he said, "and will you promise to be good for—all our sakes?" And I promised.

I must give you Fanchette's story briefly for

## G W E N D A

the nurse says I must stop writing and try to go to sleep. She is pretty and healthy and young and—without understanding because she has never had a trouble. Sleep!

Fanchette, in a taxicab, followed Granty to Prince's Gate and, slipping into the hall behind her, signalled to Balbriggan to keep quiet.

"I want to see your master." Granty spoke in a high clear voice.

Balbriggan told her that he was engaged with a gentleman in the library and was not on any account to be disturbed.

"Show me the library," she commanded and, on a sudden, stopped short as loud angry voices and a sound of scuffling came from a room just to the right of where she was standing. With a swift movement she stepped toward it, flinging open the door wide, and then drew back with a cry, for this was the sight revealed:

A short heavily built man with large, coarse hands was beating Lionel with a dog whip, raining blows upon his head and shoulders. "You hound," he shouted in a thick, hoarse voice, "I'll teach you to carry on with the woman who was once my wife. I divorced her, because she drove me to it. But I still love

## G W E N D A

her. . . . Heaven help me . . . but no other man shall have her. I'll horsewhip the lot . . . take that . . . and that . . . you beast! It's gone on too long . . . your love-making, and I'll stop it. . . . You shan't have her . . ."

It was Mr. Rosenberg; and I cannot write of that pitiful scene as Fanchette described it for Lionel was ill, mortally ill, fighting for breath, for his life; unable to defend himself, unable to ward off the cruel blows.

For a moment Granty, Fanchette and Balbriggan stood transfixed with horror not realising the position, wondering at the cringing figure, scorning his cowardice, his dog-like attitude, his acceptance of his punishment, till, in a flash, it came to Balbriggan that his master was ill, and, springing forward, he seized Mr. Rosenberg from behind wrenching the whip from him. But it was too late. Lionel swayed and fell heavily forward, striking his head violently against the marble curb of the fireplace—a dull sickening thud; I can hear it—the awful sound. . . . He only lived a few minutes.

Peter says he ruptured a blood vessel through excitement and intense passion.

And that is all: Lionel is dead. Granty is unconscious. And I have to lie still. And al-

## GWENDA

ways the sound of that thud is in my ears. Can you wonder that I want you Uncle Sandy?

This has passed an hour, but the long night is before me, and I shall hear that awful impact over and over again, and picture that handsome face and head bruised and disfigured and terrible.

Come quickly.

GWENDA.

And a woman has been the cause of my life being spoilt, and her husband's life being spoilt, and the life of my husband being ended. And she will go on smiling till her beauty has gone. And then she, too, will suffer, for she will be alone. I have that consolation.

Now that Lionel has gone I forget that he ceased to love me. I forget everything—for the moment. Perhaps it will come back, but, for the present, everything is wiped out. I only remember our days at Cancale when we sat together in the sunshine and threw pebbles into the sea.

## LETTER XXIV

SUNSET, SILVERCOMBE,  
Christmas Eve.

DEAR UNCLE SANDY:

Christmas is here and we wish you had consented to stay with us.

We know, of course, that nothing *can* touch the Trossachs for dazzling beauty and real Christmassy atmosphere at this season, for Scotland is always seasonable, but we are doing our best and we actually have snow, real, white frozen snow. And snow and sea may not be so beautiful as snow and lakes and mountains, but, I can assure you they are not half bad.

Won't you come to us for the New Year?

I promise you we will try to be cheerful, in fact we shan't try for we are quite surprisingly cheerful. We have closed the book of the past, closed it for all but the nice bits, and these we peep into but occasionally, and not often.

We have started a new book. Granty's is not so large as mine which contains many clean fair pages, and without haste I wait to see what the



## G W E N D A

writing thereon will be; but hers is of choice get up, slim and elegant, an edition de luxe in fact, suited for the beauty of the writing which will grace its pages, I trust.

We are both very well, thank you. Granty, in goloshes paddles out to feed the fowls, which are laying well. I have put a new feather in the old hat, and she has a new pink shawl and is altogether very smart. And we cannot be dull with Fanchette in the house.

For the first time in her life old Hannah has met her equal; and their attitude toward one another is a real source of delight to us. Little Ellen has gone, and Fanchette is now house-maid, parlourmaid and lady's maid rolled in one.

When Hannah is bad tempered, rude and quarrelsome, Fanchette pretends she is ill, and treats her as though she were an ailing child. When she scoffs and makes sarcastic remarks about Fanchette's silk petticoats and wonderful coiffure, the latter puts it down to jealousy and suggests that Hannah shall adopt a chignon and she will show her how the hair should be arranged over it. Hannah's snorts sometimes steal right down the passage and across the hall to the drawingroom, and often make us laugh.

## G W E N D A

Colonel Mainprice and Mary Middleton come to see us pretty frequently, and Granty has learned to play bridge. On principle she never goes 'No Trumps.' She regards it as a wile of the devil to induce gambling. She likes a good strong club call because clubs are rarely doubled. And should one of us have the temerity to double spades, she treats us with marked coldness for the rest of the evening.

No, I am not going to marry Peter Drexel in the spring. I am not going to marry anybody. Because I have been so unlucky I am not so foolish as to think there are no happy marriages. I believe there are a number of men and women who together find quiet happiness and a certain amount of contentment chiefly through the patience and adaptability of women, not radiant satisfaction and bliss—that is only for the first few months, but just quiet happiness, which seems to be enough for most. But I think I expect and want too much from marriage. I should always be wounded at the rough word, always hurt at the carelessness and indifference of my husband.

So why risk further disillusionment? I am contented now, and almost happy. Why put my head into a bag—which sounds rude to

## G W E N D A

Peter when he is so patient, but you know: "A burnt child," etc.

Before I close, we want to thank you once again for all your goodness to us in that cruel time. The very sight of you as you walked into the ward in your heather-mixture tweeds brought me strength and an uplifting of spirit. About you there seemed to linger the breath of your strong north wind and mountains. And when I was dressed and you picked me up in your arms and carried me down to the carriage and took me to Granty, I seemed to find spirit to face and get through things from your mere invigorating presence.

Good luck and always much happiness we both wish you.

Your loving

GWENDA.

## LETTER XXV

HÔTEL DE L'AFRIQUE, TANGIER,  
Christmas.

DEAR UNCLE SANDY:

Another Christmas come round, and you are chuckling much to yourself these days because you and Peter have got your way. It is so like a man or men, for Peter is actually chuckling too when I am not about to fix him with stern eye.

You badger me relentlessly, untiringly, persistently for twelve months, and then because I give in you both chuckle. You think you are so clever, so diplomatic, that women are so weak, so easily got round. But let me tell you I wanted, in the end, to be got round. Otherwise I never *should* have given in.

I am so glad that you have remained on at Sunset since the wedding. Granty will not be feeling so lonesome. You happen to be about the only man she has ever liked, I won't even say that, but tolerated.

Has she told you she is going to live with

## G W E N D A

Peter and me? And she likes the prospect. She says she wants to go to a few theatres and political meetings in her old age. Isn't she a marvel? And won't it be pleasant for London to have one *old* lady in its midst? Such a unique phenomenon.

Tangier, in spite of its noisome smells, so fascinates me that we are not moving on to Algiers for a day or two. As you approach it from the harbour it reminds you of houses of blue cards, and looks wonderfully and absolutely clean. And the moment you put your foot on shore this impression vanishes like a streak of lightning. I had heard of the smell of the East, and now it has surrounded me, you can almost feel it.

And yet I stay because I can't leave it, and Peter feels the same.

We have done the sights on mules. After us drivers in orange slippers have torn yelling "Arrah, Arrah!" or something like that. My saddle has usually been composed of anything that was handy at the moment of its manufacture: odd bits of straw and bone and old bottles, so to speak.

We gallop through the noisy, pestilential, fly-ridden market place, and over sandy wastes

## GWENDA

with no sign of vegetation but for the sad-looking prickly pears; and Mahomet, my driver, a keen rascal after backsheesh, observes sadly that the English lady is very white and tired and will go, will she not, to the Governor's garden and gather lil violets and tangerines?

"It sounds pleasant," I murmur, and we go, and it is for all the world as though we had tumbled across a transformation scene. The hot sun, glaring, dazzling sand, prickly pears, and swarms of flies one minute, and the next a carpet of violets at the foot of the tangerine trees, grateful shade, an old moss-grown water-wheel, fragrant scents, absence of flies. How is it done?

I must end. Peter wants me to go to some mosque. The religion of these people is wonderful. The call to prayer each night — so tender, so musical, touches within me some strange, unexpected chord. "Allah, Allah, Allah is great . . . He slumbereth not, neither doth He sleep . . ."

Peter is calling to me, and I must go.

All my love and greetings to you. I have written to Granty, and please take great care of her for me,  
Ever lovingly

GWENDA.

## LETTER XXVI

119a BROOK STREET, LONDON, W.,  
December 12th.

DEAR UNCLE SANDY:

Peter and I have been married twelve months to-day, and you made me promise that when the year was up I would write and tell you how things were with me, and whether I was happy, unhappy, or neither one nor the other. I believe from the twinkle in your eye you felt pretty certain what my answer would be, and as it would grieve me to disappoint you, I will admit right away to the first.

Yes. I am happy, completely and absolutely happy, and so is Peter, at least he has told me so more times than I can count. And if I were inclined to doubt his word, I have only to look into his eyes (which were always the nicest point about him) to know that he is speaking the truth.

And I think we are both appreciating our happiness so much because we have been through sorrow. People who have never been

## GWENDA

sorry in their lives can never know what it is to be really glad.

I sing as I run down the stairs to breakfast and Peter takes up the refrain and hums it as he opens his letters.

Granty is very well, and very popular which will not surprise you. Her sage remarks delight our friends. She still indulges in nasty cuts at men, but they don't seem to mind in the least, and fight for the honour of taking her in to dinner. She has joined a Suffrage Society—not a militant one, I am relieved to say.

We are all very delighted to know that you will come to us for the New Year. It is unselfish of you to leave your own country during its greatest festival. I must tell you in confidence that Granty is knitting you a tartan pair of stockings of the Clan McAlister. From the silk cover of "The Lady of the Lake" which you one day presented to me. I am inclined to think she has not got the colouring quite correct. But don't let her know this, will you?

Your very affectionate,

GWENDA.

P. S.—Of course Peter is an exceptional man.

P. S.—And Granty has only once contradicted me when I said this.









1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.





